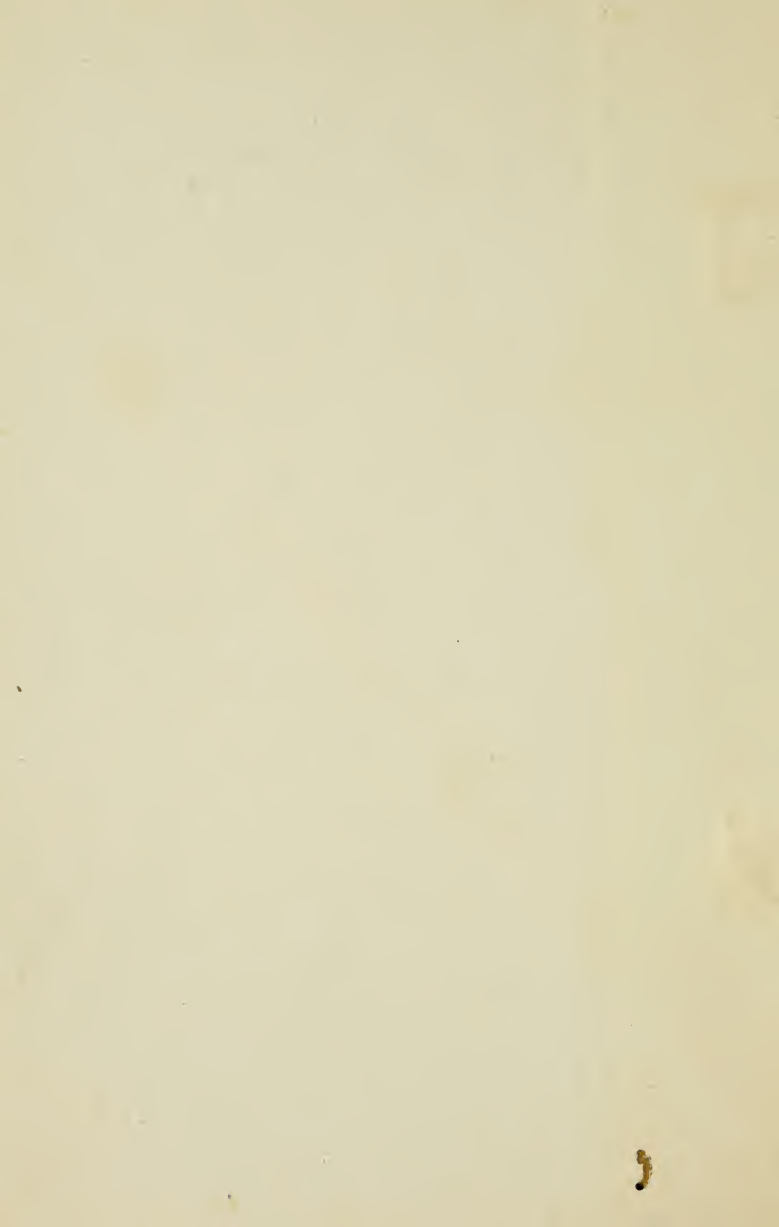


HENRY GRATTAN

PERCY M. ROXBY



IRISH 1798 COLLECTION

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HENRY GRATTAN

BEING

The Gladstone Prize Essay
In the University of Oxford, 1902

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RIGHT HON. HENRY GRATTAN, M.P.
(From an engraving by Godby after Pope.)

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The Gladstone Prize Essay
In the University of Oxford, 1902

By PERCY M. ROXBY

SCHOLAR OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD

WITH FRONTISPIECE PORTRAIT



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PREFACE

THE British people have displayed an extraordinary aptitude for governing some two hundred millions of Asiatics, whose manners, characteristics, and dialects, are utterly unlike their own. They have to a great extent solved the admittedly difficult problem of administering vast colonial dependencies. But the task of successfully governing a small neighbouring island, with which there has been for centuries constant communication, and with the characteristics of whose inhabitants they might by this time be reasonably supposed to have become intimately acquainted, seems to be as much beyond their powers as ever. This is a commonplace. It is a commonplace, too,

that an Englishman's views about Ireland are not infrequently marked by ignorance and distorted by prejudice. A political phenomenon, however, does not cease to be extraordinary because it is a commonplace. The superficial views held by most Englishmen on Ireland's problems can probably be explained by the inveterate habit of studying her history by the light of modern politics. Nearly all the information which most people in this country possess about the Legislative Union of 1800 is derived from pamphlets and books written to support or condemn the demand for Home Rule. But if it is impossible to interpret a nation's past by her present, the reverse process may be one of great utility. The following essay is an attempt to study a highly important part of Irish history from an impartial point of view, and without any political bias.

Henry Grattan the younger begins the

life of his father with these words: "The history of Mr Grattan's time comprises nearly all that is valuable in the history of Ireland." Exaggerated as this statement is, it is true that Grattan's life covers not only the most interesting, but considerably the most important epoch in the chequered record of the Irish people. In the years that elapsed between his *début* in the Irish House of Commons in 1775, and his death in 1820, occurred most of those events which gave rise to the great Irish problems of the nineteenth century. After a long season of comparative apathy, the nation in the days of Grattan awoke to a new life, and manifested a vigour of which she had hitherto given little indication. At the height of her new-born enthusiasm she obtained from England Free Trade and Autonomy. Then for eighteen years was tried the great experiment of Legislative Independence, which was

pronounced a failure at the end of that time by the English Prime Minister, and superseded by the even bolder experiment of the Legislative Union. From this eventful era the name of Grattan cannot be dissociated, and a study of his life should give us a real insight into the character and circumstances of his nation at the most instructive and critical period of her history.

“Great men hallow a whole people.”

—REV. S. SMITH.

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HENRY GRATTAN



HENRY GRATTAN



CHAPTER I

GRATTAN'S EARLY LIFE AND TRAINING

BEFORE we consider the state of Ireland when Grattan entered the stage of politics some account is necessary of his earlier years, with the double object of ascertaining the training which he received for his life-work, and of throwing some light upon his personality.

The Grattans were a Protestant family, which had for some generations played a conspicuous part in the civic life of Dublin. At least three of its members had been on terms of intimacy with Swift.¹

James Grattan, father of Henry, was for a long time the Recorder of Dublin, and for five years

¹ Lecky, "Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland" (Henry Grattan), p. 104.

one of its members. His wife was a daughter of Thomas Marlay, Chief-Justice of Ireland, and came of a distinguished stock.

The political atmosphere of the home in which the future statesman was born in July 1746 was distinctly Conservative. If we may trust the account of his grandson, James Grattan conscientiously discharged the duties of his office, but was a narrow-minded man, intolerant of all who differed from his political views. An Irishman has wittily said of him, that he was "one of those toriest of Tories who believe themselves Liberals."¹ In his official position he was brought into violent contact with Dr Lucas, one of the earliest, and certainly not one of the most moderate, champions of legislative independence.

The Recorder gave his son a good education. After passing through two schools in Dublin, Grattan entered Trinity College in 1763. Our information of his habits at this early period of his life is too scanty to give us a vivid picture of his boyhood. That he was no ordinary child, however, may be gathered from a well-known story which illustrates both the natural strength of his imagination, and his determination not to allow it to get the better of his reason. Frightened by some nursery tales of the hobgoblin description, he resorted to the unusual

¹ John MacCarthy's "Henry Grattan," p. 6.

but highly efficacious expedient of creeping night after night to a neighbouring churchyard, and there he sat upon the gravestones, "while the perspiration poured down his face," until his courage returned.¹ Nor do we know much of his College life. It is said that Dublin University in the eighteenth century was not altogether a model of academical discipline, and that there were even those who, under the name of "Pinkindindies," went so far as to nail "the ears of yelling bailiffs to the college pump."² Henry Grattan, there is reason to believe, never indulged in this somewhat barbarous form of amusement; but that it was not due to any deficiency of spirit will presently be made clear by his complete readiness to fight a duel whenever he considered that his honour was affected. Some of his contemporaries at the University were destined with him to make the Irish House of Commons almost the rival in eloquence of an assembly which contained at the same time Pitt and Burke, Sheridan and Fox. The two most notable were John Foster, who was to be the last Speaker of the Irish Parliament, and Fitzgibbon, afterwards the celebrated Lord Clare, and one of the few men against whom Grattan cherished a strong personal animosity arising out of political differences. At College

¹ Grattan's "Life and Times," by his son, v. p. 212.

² MacCarthy's "Henry Grattan," p. 7.

they were keen rivals for the highest academical honours. Grattan became, like so many of the great politicians of his time, an excellent classical scholar. Ripe scholarship was no bad equipment for Parliamentary life in a century when it was not considered inappropriate either in the English or the Irish House of Commons for members to quote the ancient orators and poets of Greece and Rome.

Grattan had fixed upon the Law as his profession, and in the Michaelmas term of 1767 became a student of the Inner Temple. He was now left to follow his own devices. His son, in criticising the system that made it necessary for every intending practitioner at the Irish Bar to face at an early age the dangers and temptations of the English metropolis, remarks: "As to studying law at the age of twenty-one in London, that seldom seriously occupies the mind or the time of any Templar."¹ To the Templar, however, whose career we are following, residence in London gave an opportunity of obtaining a political education of the highest value. Grattan had entered upon his new life but a very short time before he was struck by the immense interest attaching to the speeches and debates in both Houses of Parliament at this period. In the year 1769 and 1770 the case of the Middlesex

¹ Grattan's "Life," i. 114.

Election was attracting universal attention; the fearful scenes in London in the latter year must have led the young Irishman to consider the causes of the profound dissatisfaction of the country with an assembly that was nominally representative. The rise to power of Lord North again brought to the front the important question of England's relations with her dependencies, and the similarity between the American and the Irish contentions can have hardly failed to strike Grattan. In 1770, too, Lord Chatham, after a silence of several years, began to pour forth a fresh torrent of eloquence.¹ Grattan constantly attended the debates in both the House of Lords and the House of Commons, and his letters of this period contain vivid pictures of the political situation. He made some of the most valuable reports of Chatham's speeches that have come down to us, and during his residence at the Temple he wrote a remarkable and discriminating appreciation of the "great commoner"; it contained the oft-quoted words: "Great subjects, great empires, great characters, effulgent ideas and classical illustrations, formed the materials of his speeches."²

But Grattan was not content with listening to

¹ Lecky, "History of XVIIIth Century," iii. p. 144.

² Grattan's account of Chatham is inserted in the "Life," i. pp. 234-238.

debates. He began himself to practise the art of oratory. It was his custom at this time to retire from London during the vacations to some secluded spot, where he could pursue his methods of self-education without interruption. These methods were as efficacious as they were eccentric. We sometimes hear it said: "If walls had but voices, what could they not tell us?" If the trees of Windsor Forest could but speak, they might tell us of Grattan's earliest attempts at oratory, for they formed his first audiences. In a letter to the younger Grattan from his father's old friend Robert Day, written nearly seventy years after the events it describes, there is an anecdote which brings the habits of the future statesman at this period of his life vividly before us. One night, when they were staying together in the neighbourhood of Windsor, Grattan strolled into the heart of the forest. At midnight he began to address the chains of a gibbet, when he suddenly felt a tap on his shoulder, and on turning round was thus accosted by an unknown person: "How the d——I did you get down?"¹

This is not the place for a full discussion of Grattan's style of speaking in later years, but we cannot doubt that it was largely owing to the great experience which he acquired in the course of

¹ Grattan's "Life," i. p. 119.

these nocturnal addresses that, in the words of Mr Lecky, he "brought his sentences to a degree of nervousness and condensation that is scarcely paralleled in oratory."¹ His letters of this time display much of that beauty of phrase, taste for epigrams and antitheses, and quaint felicity of expression that characterise his speeches. But those who knew him well asserted that he was at his best in conversation. Even the scattered fragments of his talk which have survived can give us some idea of its peculiar charm. Grattan had that gift which was as common at the end of the eighteenth century as it is rare in most generations, of making almost every sentence which fell from his lips a literary treasure. He was particularly happy in depicting a character, and his delicate irony and inimitable manner were enhanced rather than the reverse by the extraordinary and even grotesque contortions of person that accompanied them. Samuel Rogers the poet, who was one of Grattan's most intimate English friends, has recorded some of the choicest of his *bons mots*. The three following may serve as specimens: "Every sentence (of Fox) came rolling like a wave of the Atlantic, three thousand miles long." "Burke was so fond of arbitrary power, he could not sleep upon his

¹ Lecky, "Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland" (Henry Grattan), p. 105.

pillow, unless he thought the king had a right to take it from under him." "Two artists have contributed not a little to the popularity of Charles the First, Vandyke and the Headsman."¹

This richness of conversation was compatible with a great simplicity of character, which he retained through life. At the height of his fame he made no attempt to cultivate those arts of dignity and aloofness which were practised in such perfection by both the Pitts. Sir Jonah Barrington tells us a charming story of how he once took to Grattan's house two Americans who were anxious to be introduced to the "Irish Demosthenes." On their arrival the servant announced that her master was engaged in business of importance, but would receive them shortly. "At length the door opened, and in hopped a small bent figure, meagre, yellow, and ordinary; one slipper and one shoe; his breeches' knees loose; his cravat hanging down; his shirt and coat-sleeves tucked up high, and an old hat upon his head." This apparition at once entered into animated conversation with the strangers who, however, presently asked "if they could shortly have the honour of seeing Mr Grattan." Thereupon Sir Jonah Barrington stepped in and introduced them to the gentleman in question. Seeing the

¹ Rogers, "Recollections" (Henry Grattan).

Americans disconcerted, and at last divining the cause, Grattan "pulled down his shirt-sleeves, pulled up his stockings; and in his own irresistible way apologised for the *outré* figure he cut, assuring them that he had totally overlooked it in his anxiety not to keep them waiting; that he was returning to Ireland next morning, and had been busily packing up his books and papers in a closet full of dust and cobwebs!"¹ After this the interview was a complete success. Grattan's zest for the ordinary pursuits of mankind, for such things as bathing, boating, sight-seeing, literature, and the drama, continued unabated until the end of his life, and one of the favourite amusements of his later years was the translation of Miss Edgeworth's novels into French.

And yet if we judged from his letters to his friend Broome, written during his residence at the Temple, we should take him to have been an extremely morbid young man. Thus in one letter he writes: "I find some moments melancholy enough, and study does not always relieve me; my nature, you know, is desponding; and my application not strenuous enough to fortify it."² In another he says: "I have left retirement, but have not left myself; the same despondency, the same fermentation of mind —

¹ Sir Jonah Barrington, "Personal Sketches," pp. 204, 205.

² Grattan's "Life," i. p. 124.

miseros tumultus animi, the Roman poet would have called them—agitate me with alternate distraction. The consciousness of this intellectual anarchy is an additional disease; it makes me repine, but cannot reform me.”¹ This morbid tendency can be partly explained by the strained relations which existed between Grattan and his father. The Recorder could not forgive his son for adopting what he considered revolutionary principles, and on his death, in 1766, he left the ancestral mansion away from the family. Henry Grattan possessed a small inalienable patrimony, but it is obvious that this mark of his father’s disfavour must have had a very depressing effect upon him. We must also take into account the saddening influence upon his spirits of the death of his mother, to whom he was devotedly attached, and of his favourite sister, both of which events took place during his residence in London. But it is probable that his depression was not wholly the result of external circumstances, but that it was to a certain extent a phase in the development of his character. Not seldom when a naturally high-spirited and ardent temperament receives its first experience of the rough usages of the world, a moroseness or even cynicism ensues, which disappears as the character matures. The keenness of this misery was accentuated in the case of Grattan, as in that of so many

¹ Grattan’s “Life,” p. 115.

similar natures, by a temporary loss of faith in God and man, and by a temporary acceptance of that epicurean creed which, whatever may be its recommendations, is terribly unsatisfactory to a man who has known what it is to contend for high aims, and to cherish lofty ideals.

After a course of about four years Grattan left the Temple, and in 1772 was called to the Irish Bar. He did not find his profession to his taste. "Your life, like mine," he wrote to Broome, "is devoted to professions which we both detest; the vulgar honours of the law are as terrible to me as the restless uniformity of the military is to you."¹

His heart was in politics, and as the desire to serve his country intensified, his convictions returned and his spirits revived. Grattan was admitted into the brilliant political circle over which Lord Charlemont presided, and his friendship with that nobleman soon procured him an *entrée* into public life. He was nominated and elected for the borough of Charlemont, and took his seat on 11th December 1775. The rotten-borough system had at least the merit of enabling the proprietors to introduce into Parliament promising young men, whose talents might otherwise have been lost to their country.

We have now seen something of Grattan's antecedents, bent of mind, and character. We have

¹ "Life," i. p. 247.

seen, too, that by a careful observation of one House of Commons, he had fitted himself to adorn another. To appreciate his subsequent career, we must first become acquainted with the political situation and social circumstances of the country to whose service the remainder of his life was dedicated.

CHAPTER II

IRELAND BEFORE 1775

THIS Essay has primarily to deal with Ireland in the days of Grattan. So eventful was the period in which his public life was lived, and so important a part did he himself play in it, that little can be said of antecedent occurrences. It is only required to ascertain, if possible, those large considerations which determined the course of Irish politics during the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century, and ultimately produced the Ireland of 1775.

The condition of the country during the early part of the Hanoverian era was perhaps more miserable than at any other period of its history. A distinguished writer has asserted that "of all the problems of government, that of the administration of a dependency is the most difficult, and of all possible modes of administering a dependency, that of leaving it to a dominant caste seems to be the worst."¹

¹ Mr Bryce, in the Introduction to "Two Centuries of Irish History," p. xx.

He points out that in proportion as the dominant caste looks to a superior and alien country for assistance, it ceases to have patriotism ; and that the more its own ascendancy is threatened, the greater is its interest in resisting measures calculated to benefit the community as a whole. The entire want of sympathy of the small clique of governors with the vast mass of the governed is the central fact round which most of the specific miseries of Ireland at that time group themselves.

The penal code against the Roman Catholics was the expression of the general system of government. It is unwise to condemn as such all the penal codes of history. Motives of self-defence have sometimes prompted them. We can hardly, however, justify on this consideration the creation of the legislative machine constructed by the Irish Protestants to grind their Catholic fellow-countrymen. It is evident that in their case bigotry coincided with self-interest. We are not concerned with examining every link of the penal chain, but only with marking the chief results upon the community as a whole of the code, gradually built up during the reigns of William III., Anne, and George I. By the various acts of that code more than three-fourths of the Irish nation were excluded from all participation in public life, whether political, municipal, or magisterial ; more than three-fourths of the Irish

nation were shut out from all the great professions, except Medicine. Nor was this all. In direct contravention of the terms of the Pacification of Limerick, the private life of the Catholic was not exempted from interference. He was not allowed to carry arms. The actual practice of his religion was hedged round with restrictions of every kind. Without incurring the penalty of the law, it was practically impossible for him to educate his family according to his own persuasion, and the system of Charter Schools was in his eyes a device for weaning his children from their ancestral faith and from filial affection.

The result of the code was to emphasize the division of the population into two castes. The smaller, possessed of the influence, power, and most of the wealth of the country, looked upon the larger as a contemptible race of aboriginals, who only existed upon sufferance; the larger, deprived of almost everything which makes life valuable except the consolation of their religion, looked upon the smaller as the usurpers of their natural rights. The Act forbidding the intermarriage of Protestants and Catholics especially favoured the growth of caste. We may say with Edmund Burke, that the code was "a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance, and as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment, and degradation of a people, and

the debasement in them of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man.”¹

The part of the penal code which perhaps more than any other produced permanently injurious effects upon the prosperity of the country was that which sought to drive the Catholics from all ownership of or vested interest in land. Excluded by restrictions or compulsory ignorance from any other form of livelihood, the ordinary Papist was compelled to exist on agriculture. Yet here he found himself forbidden not only to buy land, but even to rent it on a long or profitable lease. The agrarian system, probably the most potent cause of all Ireland's difficulties, will come up for consideration later. It is sufficient to note here that under it the great majority of the Roman Catholics sank to a position socially little superior to that of the villeins under the Feudal system, and with a standard of comfort perhaps considerably lower; the middlemen and tithe-farmers were to the peasants as task-masters demanding bricks when the labourers had no straw.

The chief circumstance which, as the century advanced, acted in favour of the Catholics, and therefore ultimately of the whole country, did not seem in itself

¹ Letter of Edmund Burke to Sir Hercules Langrishe, quoted in “Edmund Burke on Irish Affairs” (edited by Matthew Arnold), p. 277.

auspicious. It was no other than the fluctuating but, on the whole, rapid development of a keen dissatisfaction on the part of the Protestants with the policy of England towards Ireland. The colonial classes gradually began to ask themselves what was afterwards put by Grattan in the following form—"The question is whether Ireland shall be an English Settlement or an Irish nation." The question had indeed been asked long before it was felt to be pressing. It had been asked academically by Molyneux; it had been asked more enthusiastically by Swift. But at the beginning of the century it lay more or less dormant, for the Protestants had just entered into possession of that monopoly of privilege which the repression of the Catholics secured to them. Moreover, it was only by slow degrees that England built up her colonial system, and it was not until the middle of the century that the Irish Protestants began to feel its pressure upon themselves. But when once this was realised, a change came over their political attitude. The colonial classes had little direct experience of the social evils of Ireland, but it was otherwise with her constitutional and commercial evils. Whether the Irish Parliament was to continue to be chiefly a machine for registering the edicts of the English Assembly, whether the Irish pensionist was to be constantly augmented for the benefit of English officials and royal favourites, whether

Ireland's staple industries were to be crushed for the sake of English manufacturers, were questions which very intimately concerned them. Insensibly they began to look away from their mother-country to the resources and condition of the country of their adoption. But it would be unfair to attribute their altered attitude towards the old inhabitants of the island entirely to selfish motives. There was a real growth of toleration among them. The loyalty of the Catholics throughout the century had indeed not failed to impress either the Irish Protestants or the English Government. In the rebellions of 1715 and 1745 they had remained absolutely quiet, and it was generally felt that the Whiteboy disturbances were not sectarian. When England was engaged in the Seven Years' War the Catholics came forward with offers of assistance, and they were gradually admitted as privates in the Army. The Viceroys no longer alluded to them as "the common enemy," but as "His Majesty's loyal Roman Catholic subjects." Although they were still excluded from politics, they were allowed to practise their own religion practically unmolested, and most of the penal laws affecting their private life became by degrees obsolete. Many distinguished Irish Protestants, such as Henry Brooke and Edmund Burke, ardently pleaded their cause, which was further assisted by the lowering of the theological temperature consequent upon the

prevalence of latitudinarian views. In this partial reconciliation of two conflicting elements the germ of a national life was fostered. Ireland' might be described, in the phraseology of Professor Seeley, as in the process of passing from the condition of an inorganic to that of an organic State.¹ This, very roughly, was the outlook of the country when Grattan took his seat in the Irish House of Commons.

¹ See Seeley, "Introduction to Political Science," second series, Lecture vi.

CHAPTER III

CAREER OF FLOOD—IMPORTANCE OF THE AMERICAN WAR TO IRELAND — THE VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT—FREE TRADE.

GRATTAN entered Parliament at a juncture very favourable to his own advancement. The man who hitherto had been the chief leader of the National Movement was Henry Flood. Educated both at Trinity College and at Oxford, he took his seat in the Lower House in 1759, when still a young man. Like his future rival, he had subjected himself to a laborious training for the profession of an orator.¹ His undoubted talents and splendid services speedily won him the respect and admiration of his contemporaries. At the outset of his public career he had to face enormous obstacles. He found that the composition of the Irish Parliament was so corrupt that scarcely a glimmer of the new light which had begun to burn beyond its walls was reflected in it. Yet the fire of his eloquence and the contagion

¹ Lecky, "Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland" (Henry Flood), p. 63.

of his patriotism in a short time created a party pledged to the objects which he had in view.

Largely through his efforts, aided by those of Lucas, a Bill for limiting the duration of Parliament was carried through both Houses, and sanctioned in England. Hitherto the King's decease had afforded the only certain opportunity of changing the *personnel* of the Commons, and the Parliament of George II. had lasted during the whole of his reign. The limit was now placed at eight years, and Flood might justifiably consider that a great step had been taken towards the creation of a really representative assembly. This was not his only achievement. The persistent efforts of his party had procured the recall of Lord Townshend, a Viceroy who had rebuked and prorogued Parliament for rejecting a Money Bill on the ground that it did not take its rise in the legislature, and who had made use of such a wholesale system of corruption to increase the power of the Lord-Lieutenant, that the country was reduced to the verge of financial ruin. Flood was then at the zenith of his fame. In addition to his successful Parliamentary tactics, he published a series of political sketches which, under the title of "Baratariana," produced a great effect upon public opinion. One of the contributors was Grattan. Indeed, it must not be overlooked that Grattan was to a great extent Flood's pupil, and that he received during his political

apprenticeship many valuable hints from the great experience of the older statesman. In the next Viceroyalty Flood took the fatal step of his life. After much hesitation, he was induced by Lord Harcourt to accept the post of Vice-Treasurer under the Government. The arguments which on this occasion weighed with Flood will probably never be fully known. There is, perhaps, no reason for thinking that the defence which he put forward for his conduct was not sincere. He declared that at the time he accepted the Viceroy's offer, his party, under a government more liberal than Townshend's, had much dwindled, that he could not possibly have foreseen the events which were shortly to act in favour of his cherished schemes, and that he honestly believed he could do more for his country when he had some share in her government than as the leader of a hopeless minority. But whatever may have been Flood's motives in taking office, there is no question that from this moment his influence declined. Even Charlemont and Grattan, who knew him well, could never quite forgive this apparent desertion; nor were they narrow-minded men. Far less, then, could the general public be expected to sympathise with his position. They turned from the setting to the rising sun. The place which Flood had so long filled in popular estimation was now taken by Grattan. "It is the appointed lot of some of His-

tory's chosen few," says Captain Mahan, "to come upon the scene at a moment when a great tendency is nearing its crisis and culmination. Specially gifted with qualities needed to realise the fulness of its possibilities, they so identify themselves with it by their deeds that they thenceforth personify to the world the movement which brought them forth, and of which their own achievements are at once the climax and the most dazzling illustration."¹ This was the destiny of Grattan, but not of Flood. Yet it is not to detract from the merits of Grattan's achievements to say that many of the initial difficulties of his task had been cleared away by his older rival. It is indeed impossible not to sympathise with a man who, still in the prime of life, was compelled to occupy a neutral or even hostile position, while the objects for which he had long striven were being triumphantly achieved.

In the year that the popular party thus lost its old leader, the American War of Independence broke out. The supreme importance to Ireland of the issues involved were at once realised. The contention of the mother-country briefly amounted to this: that she had an undoubted right to legislate for her colonies, and that a right to legislate implied a right to tax. The Americans, on the other hand, as their case was stated by Franklin,

¹ Mahan, "Life of Nelson," vol. i. ch. i.

asserted that they owed allegiance to the King, but not to the Parliament of Great Britain. The position of Ireland was almost exactly similar. The dependence or independence of her Parliament mainly rested on the interpretation of Poyning's Law, passed in the reign of Henry VII. By that Act Ireland recognised the validity of all laws relating to herself previously passed in the British Parliament. Poyning's law also took away the power of the Irish Assembly to initiate legislation, and confined its legal right to accepting or rejecting measures laid before it by the Privy Council. The lapse of time, however, had impaired the force of this latter restriction, and in the eighteenth century both branches of the legislature were allowed to originate and pass bills, subject to their alteration or rejection either by the Irish or the English Privy Council. The constitutional question left undecided was whether the British Parliament had the right to bind Ireland by its Acts subsequent to Poyning's law. At length the Declaratory Act of 6 George I. decided that it had this right, which was thenceforth exercised, although not very frequently. The Irish legislature, however, had never acquiesced in the principle of the Declaratory Act, and had evinced much sensitiveness in its control of the Purse by frequently rejecting Money Bills which did not originate

with it. This is, perhaps, a sufficient explanation of the importance of the American struggle to Ireland. If England succeeded in vindicating her right to tax her colonies without their consent, it could hardly be doubted that she would apply the principle to the sister-island. The small guarantee of a free national life which the country possessed would thus at once disappear, and Ireland would become a mere dependency.

But although this aspect of the case was fully perceived by the colonial classes as a whole, the composition of the Irish Parliament was such that the English ministers could almost count on its pledging the support of the nation to their policy. The Upper House consisted chiefly of two elements: firstly, of peers who were either under obligation to the Government in the past or who had great expectations of "favours to come"; secondly, of the Bishops of the Established Church who were connected with the Castle by strong ties of self-interest. The Lower House was flooded with nominees of the peers, and the number of independent members was still very small. According to the report of 1784, Lord Shannon and the Ponsonby family returned 16 and 14 members respectively, and altogether 53 peers nominated 123 commoners; the majority of the remainder consisted of placemen, pensioners, or others conciliated by some form

of governmental patronage. "Corrupted freemen are the worst of slaves," and when Lord Harcourt called upon the Irish Parliament to assist in the suppression of the American Rebellion, an address was drawn up which stigmatised the action of the colonists in strong terms; it was not, however, carried without considerable opposition.

It is doubtful whether Grattan, even when supported by public opinion, would have been able to cope with this phalanx of corruption but for an event upon which Flood could not have calculated to further his designs, the creation of the celebrated Irish Volunteers. George III. and his Ministers had not sat down to count the cost before they plunged into war with the American colonies. They soon found that the immense arena of the contest demanded more men than England could supply. The Government had previously given a guarantee that at no time should Ireland be left with less than 12,000 men, except at the very gravest crisis.¹ In their hour of need the Ministers now called upon the Irish Parliament to allow them to take 4000 additional soldiers from the establishment. Their request was granted, and an offer to replace the regular troops with foreign mercenaries declined. Ireland, it was answered, was capable of defending herself. The opportunity to prove this assertion

¹ Lecky, "History of XVIIIth Century," iv. p. 384.

quickly arrived. After the disastrous defeat of General Burgoyne at the battle of Saratoga, it became evident that France had only been biding her time to attempt the recovery of the colonial empire which she had lost in the Seven Years' War. It was practically inevitable by the terms of the Family Compact that Spain would follow her lead in declaring war upon England. Yet Ireland was almost defenceless. England had neither men nor money to spare upon her. The formation of a Militia had been one of Flood's chief objects, but as the Treasury was empty the scheme became impracticable when it was most imperative. The immediate cause of the country arming in self-defence was an urgent petition to the Government from the Mayor of Belfast to garrison the town against the French. Such was the plight of England that he was informed "that half a troop of dismounted cavalry and half a troop of invalids were all that could be spared to defend the commercial capital of Ireland."¹ Within a year of this answer the Volunteers numbered 3000 men. Nor were they of that calibre which the cynic associated with the name of Volunteer in the early days of the mid-Victorian movement in England. Self-armed self-disciplined, under the leadership of the most

¹ Lecky, "Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland" (Henry Flood), p. 79.

distinguished men in the country, they constituted a force which admirably served its purpose. An invasion of Ireland from abroad did not actually take place, but we must remember that prevention is better than cure. The most striking testimony to their merit and loyalty consists in the fact that at a peculiarly disturbing time, when England herself was experiencing the evils of civil strife, the tranquility of Ireland was almost unbroken. In the first years of their existence, the volunteers never out-stepped the limits of their usefulness. At this period, indeed, there swept over the whole nation a wave of that rare kind of enthusiasm, which, while it elevates the ideals of men, at the same time controls their passions. The year that witnessed the rise of the Volunteer movement witnessed also a great concession to the Catholics. Mr Gardiner's Bill struck at what we have seen was the most pernicious part of the code, by giving the old inhabitants of the country a real interest in land. It assimilated the Catholic to the Protestant law of inheritance,¹ and enabled Papists to take out leases for 999 years. This measure prompted the greatest living Irishman to write to the Speaker: "The Irish House of Commons has done itself

¹ This involved the abolition of the "gavelling system," by which the estate of a Catholic landowner was divided among his sons, in case none of them conformed to the established religion.

infinite honour.”¹ To the credit of Lord North’s Ministry, the measure was accepted in England. It is indeed a tribute to the naturally liberal disposition, and, as Macaulay calls it, “the excellent sense,” of Lord North, when his subservience to the royal will allowed him to allow his own inclinations, that he had throughout advocated a humanitarian policy towards the Irish Catholics.

Grattan warmly supported Mr Gardiner’s Bill, and advocated a more sweeping measure of relief than was perhaps possible at that time. During these first years of his Parliamentary life he was rapidly acquiring the experience necessary to qualify him to lead Ireland to the culminating point of her greatness. That culmination was reached by two stages. The first was the acquisition of Free Trade, the second the acquisition of Legislative Independence.

The Volunteers had not at the outset any political objects in view. They had fulfilled and were fulfilling the purpose for which they had originally been formed—to defend their country against a foreign foe.

Nevertheless Lord Buckingham, who had been appointed Viceroy in 1777,² could not view their

¹ Edmund Burke to Mr Pery.

² A list of the Viceroys from 1772 to the Union with their dates is given in an Appendix.

activity without much uneasiness. His feelings indeed were mingled. He could not deny the usefulness and even the necessity of their existence, and he was at last compelled to distribute to them the arms which had been intended for the Militia.² Nor could his most careful investigations discover any spirit of disaffection among them. But the composition of the corps made him very distrustful of what their ultimate objects might be. They were formed at first exclusively from the colonial classes. Moreover, the district in which the movement provoked greatest enthusiasm was Ulster, and Ulster was chiefly inhabited by a Presbyterian people of Scottish origin, who had been for a great part of the century subject to more or less galling religious restrictions, and who were known to have keen sympathy with the claims of the American colonists. Buckingham was accordingly obliged to resort to what he termed in his official letters "temporising," and his general policy may be summed up in his own words: "Whatever may be the sentiments of Government respecting the independent troops, most studiously to avoid giving them any reason to believe that they are either feared or suspected."²

¹ Lecky, "History of XVIIIth Century," iv. p. 494.

² A great number of Lord Buckingham's official letters on this subject are inserted in Grattan's "Life," i. p. 346 to end.

The Viceroy was not in error when he supposed that Ireland would utilise her sudden acquisition of strength to obtain from England boons which she had long demanded in vain. The most pressing was the removal of the commercial restrictions.

The most important of these restrictions may be briefly stated—

(1.) Ireland was not allowed to export her woollen goods and her glass manufactures.

(2.) She was forbidden to export into the colonies any commodities, except a few specified articles.

(3.) Direct importation from the colonies was prohibited. Goods arrived by way of England, where a commission was imposed.

The above restrictions were of long standing but the war had given rise to another :

(4.) An embargo was laid on Ireland's provision trade, even with neutral countries.

Before we proceed to the sequence of events by which the country, under the leadership of Grattan, obtained Free Trade, some discussion of the merits of her claim is necessary.

Ireland's case had been ably argued by some eminent political economists of the time, notably by Mr Hely Hutchinson, Provost of Trinity College, Mr W. H. Burgh, and Sir James Caldwell. At the request of the Viceroy, these gentlemen had sent in reports on the distressed state of the country.

They advocated the views expressed by Adam Smith in his "Wealth of Nations," and exposed the fallacies of the Mercantile Theory. We may analyse very briefly the lucid exposition of Sir James Caldwell. In his valuable paper¹ he sought to prove that the removal of the commercial restrictions would benefit England as well as Ireland. He pointed out that the attempt to benefit English manufactures by depressing those of Ireland could not be more satisfactory than if a similar distinction were made between the manufactures of one part of England and those of another. "The value of money," he said, "is wholly relative to those things which it is to purchase, and when money by great Plenty becomes cheap, other things will necessarily become dear in the same proportion." This was the result of the system upon England. "Ireland, on the other hand, suffers from the Prohibitions which deprive its inhabitants of employment." His general principle therefore, was: "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." Sir James Caldwell then showed what far-reaching effects for evil a single restriction might have. Nature had intended the chief industry of Ireland to be the manufacture of her wool.

¹ "Inquiry into the Restrictions on the Trade of Ireland," inserted in volume ii. of a book entitled "Debates relative to the Affairs of Ireland."

Being forbidden to export it when manufactured into England, she smuggled it in its raw state into France. Irish wool made up with the coarser French wool into an excellent article. This profitable but illicit trade in its turn induced landowners to convert their arable land into pasture for sheep-breeding purposes, and consequently agriculture was depressed. Thus the attempt of England to encourage home industries by this method not only led to several varieties of evil in Ireland, but had the effect of aggrandising the trade of France.

Ireland thus had reason on her side, but reason was not sufficient to acquire the much-needed relief. She had to contend not so much with the English Ministry as with the commercial selfishness of the English manufacturers, who wished to monopolise the trade of the Empire. Lord North himself was not more bigoted on this subject than he was on that of Roman Catholic relief. In 1778 he brought in some Bills which, if they had been carried, might have saved England the humiliation of making concessions under compulsion. The indignation of the provincial manufacturing towns was at once aroused, and Edmund Burke, who sympathised with his country's claims, lost his seat for Bristol for advocating them.¹ Lord North quailed before the tempest which he had provoked,

¹ Croly's "Burke," i. p. 123.

and subordinated his principles to his love of office.

It was clear, therefore, that unless the hands of her Ministers were forced, England would never concede Ireland's claims. So it seemed to Grattan, and he now determined to carry the battle into the arena of Parliament. A new session was to open on 12th October 1779, and in the months preceding he sounded the chief members of his party on a possible plan of campaign. He found, however, that not a few of them were of opinion that the time was not opportune, and some declared their intention of supporting Government. Grattan, however, persisted in his resolution to move an amendment to the address, and from this moment he definitely took over the leadership of the Opposition. As the day approached, great excitement prevailed in Dublin. The Speech from the Throne, with which Lord Buckingham opened Parliament, declared that, owing to the lamentable condition of the finances, His Majesty was obliged to call upon his loyal subjects of Ireland to grant further exceptional supplies for the maintenance of the Establishment. At its conclusion Grattan rose to move his Amendment.

He plunged at once into his subject, and displayed that power of firing his audience with his own enthusiasm, which was one of the most marked features of his oratory. "Why?" he asked, "had the

Speech made no reference to the subject that was in everybody's thoughts? To what was the bankruptcy of the State due? To restrictions on Ireland's trade.

"The ill-fated measures of England have plunged this country into hopeless calamities; every condescension is extended to the monopolising spirit of insignificant towns in England, while this faithful though oppressed people can neither draw attention nor pity." Moreover, of what does this establishment, which we are asked to support, consist? Of "infamous pensions to infamous men."¹

This speech had a great effect, and the ranks of the Government began to be thinned by desertion. Mr Burgh, who held the post of Prime Sergeant, supported the Amendment in strong terms, but the attitude of Flood was the most serious blow to the Viceroy's hopes for a majority. He had supported the Government in its demand for assistance against America, but he had for some time showed signs of returning to his old party. He now proposed that the words "Free Trade" should be substituted for the somewhat cumbrous terminology of the Amendment, a suggestion to which Grattan at once agreed. When some of the leading supporters of the Government thus transferred their allegiance, it was hardly to be expected that many of the rank and file would not

¹ Grattan's "Speeches" (edited by his son), vol. i. pp. 22-24.

follow their example. Among some of the more volatile a kind of patriotic competition arose. The issue of the day, at first so doubtful, was now certain. The Amendment was carried unanimously, and when the Speaker, at the head of the Commons, went to present it to the Viceroy, he passed through streets lined with cheering Volunteers. The colourless character of the King's answer seemed to show that the Ministers would not relinquish the contest without a struggle. It was soon brought home to them, however, that a new force had arisen in Ireland, and that they had no alternative but to surrender.

The Volunteers gave indications that their patience was becoming exhausted; on the anniversary of William III.'s birthday the Dublin corps paraded round his statue in College Green, and two cannons exhibited the significant inscription, "Free Trade or this."¹

The free-holders and associations combined to instruct the representatives to vote for a short Money Bill, and members on their way to the House were stopped by armed citizens who extracted a promise to that effect from them. It seemed not unlikely that a dangerous riot would take place.

During the whole course of his career Grattan had seldom a more difficult part to play than at this moment, and never did the mingling of moderation

¹ "Two Centuries of Irish History," p. 85.

and boldness in his disposition stand him in better stead. He added abundant courage to a firm grasp of the principle that "order is Heaven's first law." We have already noticed his outspoken language to the Government. Yet at this moment he dared to say to his supporters: "Here I would recommend to the people moderation above all things; nor should I wish to waste one single spark of public fire, by any unavailing act of violence or tumult, which would disgust the moderate and terrify the timid; certain that by calmly persisting in their humble and just desires, they will associate in their support all ranks of men."¹

On 24th November he proposed and carried through the House, by a majority of 123 over the Government, a resolution: "That at this time it would be inexpedient to grant new taxes." On the following day a further success was gained. By 138 votes to 100 the House determined that the Money Bill should be granted for six months only. Grattan's speech on this occasion was eclipsed by that of the Prime Sergeant.

"Talk not to me of peace," said Mr Burgh, in a peroration which has preserved his name from oblivion; "Ireland is not in a state of peace; it is smothered war. England has sown her laws like dragons' teeth, and they have sprung up in armed men."²

¹ Grattan's "Life," i. p. 401.

² *Ibid.*, p. 403.

In December, by the advice of Lord Buckingham, Lord North proposed and carried in the English Parliament three Bills, of which the first conceded to Ireland the free exportation of her wool and woollen manufactures, the second the free exportation of her glass manufactures, and the third, free trade with the Colonies.

This was the first, and in one sense the greatest of Grattan's achievements. The acquisition of legislative independence seemed at the time a more impressive victory, but it was not one which was destined to be permanent, and of the other three great practical objects of his life—Parliamentary reform, commutation of tithe, and Catholic emancipation—none were actually obtained until after his death. But the removal of the commercial restrictions bore excellent fruit during the lifetime of Grattan, and he had the happiness of seeing the material prosperity of Ireland increasing, even when her condition in other respects was far from satisfactory.

CHAPTER IV

LEGISLATIVE INDEPENDENCE

THIS success did not conclude the constitutional struggle, but only, as it were, a single campaign. A strong position had been won, which brought within sight the ultimate object of attack. The Volunteers, far from disbanding, organised themselves on more scientific principles. A great number of reviews were arranged for the summer of 1780, and Generals appointed. At this stage not a few independent members began to view with apprehension the militant aspect of the nation, and, in consequence, to give their general support to Government. Yet there were still some guarantees for the constitutional character of the movement, and not the least was the fact that Lord Charlemont continued to be chief Reviewing-General. It was Grattan, however, who was the main safeguard against disaffection, and on his ability to control not less than to lead the popular cause depended the legality of its development.

On 19th April 1780, four months after the concession of Free Trade, he rose to move the first Declaration of Rights. The speech which he then delivered was always considered by Grattan himself as the finest of his orations. The majority of his contemporaries who listened to it, and the majority of the posterity who have read it, have ratified his opinion. It surveyed the whole ground covered by legislative independence. It arrayed the arguments of its supporters to approve them, and of its opponents to refute them. We cannot, perhaps, better appreciate the merits and defects of Ireland's case than by some examination of the main features of the speech.¹ A study of it convinces the reader that Grattan did not intend to address himself merely to the body of men who listened to the sound of his voice. He had indeed much for the ears of the Commons, but he was also addressing through them the people of Ireland, and still more the Parliament and Ministry of England. We may make this indeed the basis of classification, and divide his speech into the arguments intended for the three several parties. For the members of the Irish Parliament he had a very simple exhortation.

"You cannot dictate," he said, "to those whose sense you are entrusted to represent; your ancestors,

¹ The extracts quoted are taken from Grattan's "Speeches," vol. i. pp. 38-53.

who sat within these walls, lost to Ireland trade and liberty; you, by the assistance of the people, have recovered trade, you still owe the kingdom liberty; she calls upon you to restore it."

Similarly: "Never was there a Parliament in Ireland so possessed of the confidence of the people." And again: "You have done too much not to do more; you have gone too far not to go on."

It cannot be denied that for the general public he emphasized the principle that England's necessity is Ireland's opportunity. He laid stress on the supineness of England, exhausted by an unsuccessful war, and not immune from internal division, and he contrasted her condition with the vigour and unanimity of Ireland.

But the greater part of his speech was devoted to arguments addressed to the Imperial Parliament and Ministry. Like other great orators, he sought not only to influence the reason of men, but to play upon their fears. He enlarged upon the almost desperate condition of England's military resources, drew attention to the number and determination of her Continental foes, and asked if she could afford to dispense with the whole-hearted support of her sister-country.

The weakness of Ireland's case lay in its judicial aspect, and it is very apparent in Grattan's speech.

The arguments by which he attempted to prove that the Irish Parliament had a constitutional right to be independent are singularly unconvincing. He contended that various grants, particularly "Magna Charta," ordained to both kingdoms the same privileges, viz. "not to be bound by any Act, except made with archbishops, bishops, earls, barons, and freemen of the Commonality." Now at the time when most of these charters were granted, neither the English nor the Irish Parliament could be said to exist, and there was certainly nothing in any of them which could determine the relations between the two legislatures. Again, he evaded all precedents in favour of England's claim by calling them "Acts of power," even when those Acts had been ratified by the Irish Parliament. Grattan stood on firmer ground when he claimed that Irishmen were only demanding their birthright, and once or twice, perhaps purposely, he confused the two issues of legality and justice. Thus for instance, addressing the Commons, he said: "Eighteen counties are at your bar; they stand there with the compact of Henry, with the charter of John, and with all the passions of the people." The "compact of Henry" and "charter of John" were in themselves sufficiently vague terms, but at any rate they had no connection with the "passions of the people." In the same breath he makes the people say: "Our lives are at your service, but our liberties

we received them from God; we will not resign them to man." It was, therefore, somewhat difficult to discover whether Ireland's claim rested on an inalienable dispensation from the Deity or on a special grant based upon the "compact of Henry" and the "charter of John."

But if Grattan's legal reasoning was far from conclusive, some of his other arguments were very powerful. To those, for instance, who urged that it would be ungrateful on the part of Ireland to wrest another concession from England, when she had just granted Free Trade, he returned the apposite and characteristic answer: "No man can be grateful or liberal of his conscience, nor woman of her purity, nor nation of her liberty." He also proved conclusively the instability of the previous concessions; they had been granted by England in her hour of danger and of impotence, and it was by no means unlikely that at a more prosperous time she would recall them; indeed, the Prime Minister himself had said that they were "resumable at pleasure." There could be no guarantee for their security until they were placed beyond the control of the Imperial Parliament. The speech concluded with a beautiful peroration:

"I never will be satisfied so long as the meanest cottager in Ireland has a link of the British chain clanking to his rags; he may be naked, he shall not

be in iron ; and I do see the time is at hand, the spirit is gone forth, the declaration is planted ; and though great men should apostatise, yet the cause will live ; and though the public speaker should die, yet the immortal fire shall outlast the organ which conveyed it, and the breath of liberty, like the word of the holy man, will not die with the prophet but survive him."

Great as was the indirect influence of this speech, the keen eye of Flood perceived that the Government had got a majority in Parliament, and he advised Grattan not to imperil his cause in a division. This suggestion was adopted. The Government, however, was not destined to be rid of the question, and it was soon afterwards raised in a form as unpleasant as it was unexpected. The maintenance of discipline in the Irish Army depended on the English Mutiny Act, which, as the law then stood, applied to Ireland.¹ It was a constant reminder to Irishmen of the principle which they detested, but it also afforded them an opportunity of proving their dislike in a practical way. To the dismay of the Lord-Lieutenant, magistrates began to refuse to punish deserters, on the ground that the English Mutiny Act did not apply to Ireland. It was obvious to clear-headed men that if this spirit spread, there must be an end either to the Army itself or to any means of enforcing discipline in

¹ May's "Constitutional History," vol. ii. p. 525.

it. It was, therefore, with general approbation that Mr Bushe¹ brought forward an Irish Mutiny Bill in the House of Commons. The Viceroy obtained a postponement of the question to allow him time to receive instructions from the imperial authorities. The answer he received was that a principle of such an innovating character was to be resisted to the utmost; yet the measure was carried with only 18 dissentients. The Irish Privy Council, who were themselves convinced of its necessity, forwarded the bill to England without alteration; much depended upon its fate there. It was ultimately returned with an omission which nullified the force of the concession; the words that limited the Mutiny Act to one year were expunged. According to the cumbrous procedure in vogue, the Irish Parliament had now the right of accepting or rejecting the measure in its altered form, and it might have been expected that as it had readily been passed in its original shape, so in its mutilated condition it would have been as summarily rejected. But most of the members who swelled the majority in the first instance had not been actuated by a love of the principle of independence, but by a conviction that a Mutiny Act of some kind was necessary. They viewed with complacency an alteration which placed the Army beyond the control of the legislature, and, in spite of the efforts of Grattan

¹ He had married Grattan's sister.

and his party, the Mutiny Act was made perpetual by 114 votes to 62.

Although the Castle had met with defeat on the question of Free Trade, it had carefully husbanded its resources for the more important contest which had now begun. The Irish Houses of Parliament would have maintained a very exalted standard of public morality, if they had shown themselves capable of resisting the dazzling inducements to support the Government which were held out to them. There is something almost pathetic in the heroic despair with which Lord Buckingham, at the end of his term of office, forwarded to the Ministry the formidable list of promised favours, which was the price of his supporters.

"Nothing could be more against my inclinations," he wrote to Lord North, "than the yielding to solicitations of gentlemen upon the line of peerage; but without engagements strongly to recommend several to that mark of His Majesty's favour at the close of the session, it would have been impossible for me in any sort to have surmounted the various difficulties which have lately attended Government."¹

In addition to the great number of gentlemen who had been qualifying for peerages, there were some whose aspirations did not soar so high, and to such

¹ Grattan's "Life," ii. p. 163; and Lecky, "History of XVIIIth Century," iv. 505.

tempting baits of places and pensions were held out.¹

Before these allurements, the patriotism of many members vanished as suddenly as it had appeared, and at a heavy price Government secured the continued subservience of the Irish Parliament. In previous years nothing else was needed to guard against innovation, but a man had now arisen who, by his extraordinary power of concentrating the nation's energy, was about to make the Assembly give voice, whether it was willing or not, to the prevailing sentiment of the country. The writer of a remarkable Essay on Grattan has said of him: "The people of Ireland were mutes when he arose. He unloosed the string of their tongues, and they spake plain."² At the Dungannon Convention their utterance was

¹ Lord Buckingham's recommendations are given in Grattan's "Life," ii. pp. 163-177. The following are two typical instances:

"Sir Robert Deane has uniformly, with four friends, supported His Majesty's measures, and has never suggested a difficulty upon any occasion; his property is very considerable."

"James Carigue Ponsonby, Esq^{re}. :—This gentleman bought his seat in Parliament, and in the contest for the Speaker's Chair offered his vote to Lord Harcourt, in favour of Mr Pery, on condition he should represent his conduct to His Majesty, hoping it might be kept in account when he should in some future day be thought deserving of His Majesty's favour."

² "Dublin University Magazine," vii. (1836); "Gallery of Illustrious Irishmen." (Henry Grattan).

unmistakable. It gave effect to the indignation created in the country by the conduct of the representatives in accepting the perpetual Mutiny Act.

The Convention of Dungannon was chiefly the idea of Lord Charlemont and the first Ulster regiment of Volunteers which he commanded. It consisted of a public meeting of the delegates of 143 Ulster Volunteer corps, undoubtedly representing the portion of the nation which was politically active.

There were laid before it a number of resolutions drawn up by the leaders of the popular party, including Grattan, Flood, and Charlemont. Of these resolutions the following were the most important.

(1.) That "a citizen by learning the use of arms does not abandon his civil rights." (Passed unanimously.)

(2.) That "the independence of judges is equally essential to the impartial administration of justice in Ireland as in England." (Passed unanimously.)

(3.) That "a claim of any body of men, other than the king, lords, and Commons of Ireland, to make laws to bind this kingdom, is unconstitutional, illegal, and a grievance." (Passed unanimously.)

(4.) That "the power exercised by the Privy Council of both kingdoms under, or under colour or pretence of, the Law of Poyning is unconstitutional and a grievance." (Passed with one dissentient.)

(5.) That at every ensuing election they would support only those candidates who promised to seek a redress of grievances. (Passed with eleven dissentients.)

In addition to these resolutions, Grattan presented two which he had drawn up on his own initiative ; they were to the effect that "we hold the right of private judgment in matters of religion to be equally sacred in others as ourselves ; that as men and as Irishmen, as Christians and as Protestants, we rejoice in the relaxation of the penal laws against our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects, and that we conceive the measure to be fraught with the happiest consequences to the union and prosperity of the inhabitants of Ireland." (Passed with two dissentients.) A spirited address to the minority in Parliament was then adopted.¹

The Convention had been throughout decorous and orderly, and there was nothing in its resolutions or organisation which could be described as illegal.

¹ The address was as follows : "We thank you for your noble and spirited though ineffectual efforts in defence of the great and commercial rights of your country. Go on ! the almost unanimous voice of the people is with you, and in a free country the voice of the people must prevail. We know our duty to our sovereign, and are loyal ; we know our duty to ourselves, and are resolved to be free. We seek for our rights, and no more than our rights ; and in so just a pursuit, we should doubt the being of a Providence if we doubted of success."—"Two Centuries of Irish History," p. 87.

A week later Grattan rose in the House of Commons to move a Declaration of Legislative Independence for the second time. As we traced his arguments in some detail on the previous occasion, we need not be detained by this speech except to notice that :

(a) He maintained that the right of the British Parliament to bind Ireland by her Acts had only been asserted since the Restoration, and that no precedents in its favour had more force than the levying of ship-money in establishing a valid precedent for the violation of "Magna Charta."

(b) He laid great stress on the fact that England had now offered immunity from imperial taxation and an unfettered legislature to disloyal America, and asked if she would refuse the same boons to loyal Ireland.

(c) He constantly reiterated his affection for Great Britain, and the determination of Ireland to assist her.

The wavering attitude of the members was indicated by the smallness of the majority against him. The new Viceroy, Lord Carlisle, seems to have convinced himself not only of the expediency but also of the justice of granting Ireland's claim, and in his official letters he strongly urged the Government to yield. It is not improbable that they would have taken his advice, but the overthrow of Lord North's Ministry, and the accession to power of a

Whig combination, placed the matter beyond doubt.

Lord Rockingham became Prime Minister, Lord Shelburne and Charles James Fox, Secretaries of State; Lord Carlisle was succeeded as Viceroy by the Duke of Portland, who arrived at Dublin only two days before Parliament was to reassemble. The Ministers were therefore anxious that the great measure should be postponed, in order to give time for Portland to master the situation, and for arranging, if possible, a compact between the two countries on all the constitutional and commercial questions. Subsequent difficulties might have been avoided if this course had been taken, but Grattan strenuously opposed it on the ground that the Speaker had issued a special summons to members to attend, and that the country, now strung to the pitch of expectation, would be suspicious of any delay.

His policy prevailed, and on 9th April Fox laid before the English House of Commons a message from the King to take the grievances of Ireland into consideration for a "final adjustment."

A week later, on 16th April 1782, one of the most memorable days in the history of the Irish nation, the same message was delivered to the Assembly of the Commons on the other side of St George's Channel.

After Mr Ponsonby had moved an address of thanks to the King, Grattan rose, "bearing evident marks of much bodily illness and great mental anxiety." The significance of the change which was now being effected was emphasized in the few famous sentences with which his speech began.

"I am now to address a free people," said Grattan; "ages have passed away, and this is the first moment in which you could be distinguished by that appellation. I have spoken on the subject of your liberty so often that I have nothing to add, and have only to admire by what heaven-directed steps you have proceeded until the whole faculty of the nation is braced up to the act of her own deliverance. I found Ireland on her knees, I watched over her with an eternal solicitude; I have traced her progress from injuries to arms and from arms to liberty. Spirit of Swift! spirit of Molyneux! your genius has prevailed! Ireland is now a nation! in that new character I hail her! and bowing to her august presence, I say, 'Esto perpetua!'"

The Address to the Throne which he moved at the end of his oration reiterated the claims of Ireland, together with ardent expressions of gratitude for His Majesty's action, and an assurance of the determination of the country to stand or

fall with the British nation. The Volunteers expressed similar sentiments on the following day.

In May Fox moved and carried in the English House of Commons the repeal of the Declaratory Act of 6 George I. and the restoration to Ireland of the Appellant Jurisdiction. As these were the only points which lay directly between the two Parliaments, the Ministry carried an address to the King on the remaining contentions.

The formal answer to Grattan's address was laid before the Irish Assembly by the Viceroy on the 27th. In this His Majesty gave his consent to all that was demanded, *i.e.*—

(1.) To Acts preventing the suppression or alteration of Bills in the Irish or English Privy Councils, which was equivalent to a repudiation of Poyning's Law; and

(2.) To a limitation of the Mutiny Bill.

Thus was achieved Legislative Independence, and, setting aside the question of its ultimate value to the country, it was a great measure; for in the process of its attainment Ireland had indeed become a nation. A band of noble men, combating corruption and contending for lofty ideals, had inspired their countrymen by the force of their example with a sterling patriotism which has seldom been excelled. The legislature had been made efficient to an extent that a few years before

had seemed impossible; equally astonishing was the disappearance of religious intolerance, and the contemporary history of England has nothing to parallel the resolutions of the Dungannon Convention on the emancipation of the Roman Catholics.¹ For this improvement of the nation Grattan more than anyone else was responsible, and it forms in itself a tribute to the greatness of his work which remains, even if we consider that subsequent events proved the impracticability of an independent Parliament. If he had achieved nothing else in the course of his career, yet on this account alone Grattan might have applied to himself the proud words of his great fellow-countryman Burke, in his farewell address to his constituents: "I have not lived in vain."

The preliminary work of the emancipated Parliament was indeed of the happiest augury. Reforms, in no unmeaning sense of the word, crowded upon one another.

The independence of the Judges was secured; the criminal code was revised when that of England was still a blot on her record; measures to improve the disgraceful state of the prisons were carried; a lead was given to all nations in hygienic reform

¹ The Lord George Gordon Riots of 1780 followed on the attempt to grant a few small concessions to the English Catholics.

by the creation of public baths for the lower classes; if sanitation and if beauty be the tests, Dublin became one of the noblest capitals in Europe.¹ Yet more important and more significant were two measures, the record of which will appropriately close this chapter. When the Viceroy signified to the House the King's consent to Ireland's demands, Grattan rose to suggest a grant of £100,000 to equip 20,000 Irish sailors for the British Navy, a proposal which was enthusiastically adopted. At the same time Mr Bagenal proposed that a grant of a like amount should be made to Grattan in recognition of his services. The proposition was distasteful to a man whose patriotism was not actuated by mercenary motives, and he was with difficulty persuaded by his friends to accept £50,000. He was now assured of a competence, which enabled him to dispense with practice at the Bar, and to devote all his talents and energies to his country. Thus for a while there was for Grattan and the country which he had greatly benefited one of those periods of unclouded happiness which are so rare and of such brief duration alike in the lives of men and of nations.

¹ For a list of these reforms see "Two Centuries of Irish History," pp. 95-96.

CHAPTER V

REACTION—FLOOD AND GRATTAN—GRATTAN'S ORATORY.

THE rapid reaction that followed the triumph just described, the lowering of the high political standard to which the Irish people had attained, and the sudden decline of Grattan's popularity, form lamentably good instances of "the sad vicissitude of things." Yet a reaction might reasonably have been anticipated. Even a people distinguished for sobriety of disposition, and schooled in moderation by a long experience of the ups and downs of political fortune, might easily have been affected by changes so momentous as those which had just taken place. But the temper of Irishmen has usually been esteemed mercurial, and their capacity to bear national success had been hardly tested hitherto. History, moreover, proves that the anticipation of a great legislative triumph in nearly all cases exceeds the fruition. The English people, for instance, had ample

opportunity to acquaint themselves with the nature of the Reform Bill before it was actually passed, but the Chartist Riots showed how profoundly disappointed was a large section of the population with its results. In Ireland the triumphs of Free Trade and Legislative Independence had been won in a short space of time,¹ and the jubilation of the people was proportionately sudden.

But although a reaction of some kind must have almost inevitably occurred, three or four special events conspired to increase it. Of these the most important was the attitude of Flood. We have seen that after remaining silent for several years, he had rejoined the popular party over the movement of Free Trade, and he had lost his office in consequence. But he soon found that his old influence was gone, and that he was looked upon with something akin to suspicion by his former colleagues. He had previously given evidence of a very sensitive disposition in his negotiations with Harcourt about taking office, and the knowledge that he occupied an inferior position mortified him exceedingly. To what extent personal jealousy dictated the political differences which now arose between him and Grattan we have

¹ These objects were not new, as we have seen, but before Grattan entered Parliament they had been regarded as almost impracticable.

no means of deciding, but it certainly embittered them. The first was the question of "simple repeal," and, briefly stated, was as follows: Flood contended that the repeal of the Declaratory Act was an insufficient guarantee for the maintenance of Ireland's new constitution; the Declaratory Act, he said, was an affirmation of a right alleged to be possessed by the British Parliament of binding Ireland by legislation, and the repeal was merely a withdrawal from motives of expediency of that affirmation, and not of the alleged right itself; an express renunciation by Great Britain of such a claim would alone give Ireland a charter of freedom based on a legal foundation. Grattan, on the other hand, urged that a treaty had been made between England and Ireland, which both countries were in honour bound to observe. The one country had solemnly pledged herself to maintain the constitution of the other, and it would be both ungrateful and impolitic to doubt her sincerity; nothing could be more detrimental to good relations between Great Britain and Ireland than to force from England a confession of injustice in the past, which would be implied in an Act of Renunciation, and this course would have the additional disadvantage of basing Ireland's freedom upon a British Act, which might itself be repealed.

Flood, however, propagated his opinions, and some unfortunate events combined to give them a show of reason. By the carelessness of some clerks Ireland was included in two English Acts; Lord Abingdon asked for leave to bring in a Bill in the English House of Lords to assert the right of Great Britain to regulate the external trade of Ireland, and Lord Mansfield decided in the English Court of King's Bench an Irish case which had come before it previous to the repeal of the Declaratory Act.¹ The Government denied any treacherous intention in these events. They were certainly not responsible for the inadvertence of a draughtsman, or for the conduct of Lord Abingdon, and there was much to be said in favour of Lord Mansfield's action.² But occurring at a time when a statesman of unquestioned political experience was asserting the instability of Ireland's newly-won liberties, these circumstances produced a great impression; the lawyers' corps of Volunteers supported Flood's contention, and a spirit of suspicion rapidly spread through the country. "Gratitude," said

¹ Lecky, "Eighteenth Century," vi. p. 305.

² There is no reason to suspect Lord Mansfield of any ulterior motive in deciding this case. Apparently it had been advanced some stages before the Repeal of the Declaratory Act, and to have transferred it would have involved the parties concerned in heavy losses. See Lord Mornington's letter to Grattan on this subject.—"Life," iii. p. 34.

Dr Johnson on one occasion, "is a plant of great cultivation," and the Irish people began to consider that perhaps they had been duped after all, and owed their position to the Volunteers rather than to Grattan. In 1783 Lord Temple, who had succeeded the Duke of Portland as Viceroy, was so impressed with the necessity of restoring confidence, that he recommended the English Ministers to pass the Renunciation Act, and his advice was taken.

But there were further points of disagreement between Flood and Grattan, and the fact that in each case the latter opposed the sentiments of the majority of the nation is one of many proofs that he never hesitated to sacrifice his popularity to what he considered the real interests of the country. Firstly, then, Flood was in favour of the continued existence of the Volunteers, Grattan of their disbandment. The latter's views on this subject had been expressed with great felicity in moving the final Declaration of Right.

"And now, having given a Parliament to the people, the Volunteers will, I doubt not, leave the people to the Parliament, and thus close, specifically and majestically, a great work, which will place them above censure and above panegyric. These associations, like other institutions, will perish ; they will perish with the occasion that gave them being,

and the gratitude of their country will write their epitaph, and say, 'This phenomenon, the departed volunteer, justified only by the occasion, the birth of spirit and grievances, with some alloy of public evil, did more public good to Ireland than all her institutions; he restored the liberties of his country, and thus from the grave he answers his enemies.'"¹

Grattan was firmly convinced that Ireland needed a period of rest in which to consolidate what she had gained, and such a period would never arrive so long as the existence of an armed organization engendered a highly-charged political atmosphere. Flood, on his side, argued that for the freedom of Ireland to be permanent a reform of Parliament was necessary, and that this could only be affected at the dictation of the Volunteers. Probably with the object of increasing the power of the latter body, but nominally to cut down expenses, he zealously pleaded in and out of Parliament for a reduction of the military establishment, which at this moment stood at 15,000 men. Here again he was opposed by Grattan, whose chief anxiety at this period was to support the connection between the two countries. "In 1779," he said, "when the liberties of Ireland were denied, and those of America in danger, it was thought inadvisable to retrench our army.

¹ Grattan, "Speeches," i. p. 127.

There can be no such reason to reduce it now, when both are acknowledged and confirmed."¹

Broken in health by all that he had passed through, and chagrined by the irrational animosity shown towards him, Grattan went abroad for two months at the end of 1782 to recover his strength, but on his return he once more took an active part in politics. His faculties were again to be much strained. It had for some time been clear that a collision between Flood and Grattan was inevitable; but probably few of their contemporaries forecasted a storm of such magnitude as actually burst. It occurred in the course of a debate upon the reduction of the military establishment, and was provoked by a very unwarranted allusion by Grattan to the ill-health of his rival, which he implied had been used to cloak his want of patriotism. The scene that followed was a battle of the gods. It has been asserted, probably with justice, that the Philippics to which the Irish Commoners listened for two hours are worthy to be compared with those employed by Demosthenes and Aeschines against each other, and they certainly surpass in grandeur and impressiveness the most famous Parliamentary duels between Mr Gladstone and Mr Disraeli. Smarting under the imputation just mentioned, Flood

¹ "Life," iii. p. 88.

rose and gave his pent-up feelings full vent. He delivered an elaborate justification of his own conduct, and an impeachment of that of Grattan. He contended that although he had taken office he had never changed his opinions, whereas his rival's adhesion to the present extravagant administration was a clear instance of apostasy. With great bitterness he alluded to Grattan's reception of the Parliamentary grant. "I am not the gentleman," he exclaimed, "who subsists upon your accounts. I am not the mendicant patriot who was bought by my country for a sum of money, and then sold my country for prompt payment." He concluded: "I have now done; and give me leave to say, if the gentleman enters often into this kind of colloquy with me, he will not have much to boast of at the end of the session."

His speech was powerful, but the invective of Grattan in reply has rarely been equalled, and probably never excelled. He began quietly by defending himself against the specific charges brought against him by Flood, and then substituting a fictitious being for his opponent, he proceeded to dissect the character of his rival. He made great capital out of Flood's acceptance of office and support of the Government in their demand for troops to crush the Americans. There is perhaps

nothing even in Junius which can equal in power the following passage :—¹

“As to America,” said Grattan, “I will suppose him to have voted 4000 of the Irish army to fight against her, calling those butchers an armed negotiation, and thus, with a metaphor in his mouth and a bribe in his pocket, give a base suffrage against the liberty of America, the eventual liberty of Ireland, and the cause of Mankind.

“I will suppose this man’s honour equal to his oath. I will suppose him an insufferable egotist ; I will stop him in his career, and say,—Sir, you are mistaken if you think your talents are as great as your life is infamous.” He concluded : “Influenced by place, or stung by disappointed ambition, we have seen you pursue a course of most manifest duplicity. You can be trusted by no man ; the people cannot trust you ; the Minister cannot trust you ; you have dealt out the most impartial treachery to both, and now you tell the nation she was ruined by others when she was sold by you. You fled from the Mutiny Bill, you fled from the Sugar Bill, you fled from the Six Months’ Money Bill—I therefore tell you, in the face of your country, before all the world, and to your beard, you are not an honest man.”

¹ These extracts are taken from Grattan’s “Life,” iii. pp. 87-95. There is a somewhat different and longer version in the “Speeches.”

Further recrimination was stopped by the Chair, and Flood at once challenged Grattan to a duel; the law, however, interfered, and when Grattan arrived at the appointed place he found his rival under arrest. He then attempted to fix Holyhead as the scene of combat, but Flood refused to carry the quarrel out of Ireland.¹ This memorable contest made the breach between the two great leaders irreparable, and it was nearly as disastrous to their party as the almost equally tragic separation of Fox and Burke was to the Whig cause in England a few years later. In the case of both men we can find circumstances to palliate but not to justify their conduct. Flood, soured and disappointed, conceived that after having borne the brunt of the battle, he was denied the humblest niche in the Temple of Fame; Grattan, on the other hand, believed that his rival's views were not only most pernicious to the true interests of the country, but were actuated by jealousy of himself, and he interpreted Flood's previous career by the light of his conduct during the last two years. Yet each was signally forgetful of the real services of the other, and of how important it was for Ireland that they should preserve at least the appearance of cordiality.

On the whole, Grattan seems the more to blame for his entire forgetfulness of his early obligations to Flood, and for the discourteous allusion to his health

¹ "Life," iii. pp. 96 to 98.

which gave rise to this brilliant but deplorable passage of arms. It is probably the most discreditable incident in the career of the great Irish patriot, and there is good reason to believe that he lived to regret it bitterly.

This is, perhaps, the most suitable place for a brief discussion of Grattan's oratory, of which the foregoing extracts are no mean specimens. Sufficient quotations have indeed been given to show the great beauty of phrase, the wealth of epigram, and the power of antithesis which distinguished his speeches. They enabled the speaker to illuminate his subject with a surprising clearness ; just as on a dark summer night a flash of lightning suddenly presents to us the whole appearance of a room, the vivid phrases of Grattan brought the essential features of a debated subject in a moment before his audience. An excellent instance occurs in his first speech in favour of legislative independence, when he sought to prove the insecurity of the commercial concessions so long as Great Britain had it in her power to recall them. ' Present relaxation, but tyranny in reserve, may be a subject for illumination to a populace, or a pretence for apostacy to a courtier, but cannot be the subject of settled satisfaction to a free-born, an intelligent, and an injured community.' Sometimes the same effect was produced by an elaborate metaphor. " Let other nations imagine that subjects are made for the

monarch, but we conceive that kings, and parliaments, like kings, are made for the subjects. The House of Commons, honourable and right honourable as it may be; the Lords, noble and illustrious as we pronounce them, are not original but derivative. Session after session they move their periodical orbit about the source of their being, the nation; even the King's Majesty must fulfil his due and tributary course round that great luminary, and, created by its beam, and upheld by its attraction, must incline to that light, or go out of the system."¹

Such glowing sentences were bound to exercise a magnetic influence over his hearers, and one of the great merits of Grattan as an orator was his power of inspiring his audience with his own enthusiasm. In Mr. Lecky's opinion, Chatham alone could rival him in this respect among British orators.²

But this style of speaking on its worst side degenerated into a jugglery of words, which, while they confused his opponents, did not convince a sober-thinking man. A writer, already quoted, says of Grattan: "We mean no disparagement to the illustrious Irishman when we say, that he sometimes reminds us of the magnificent charlatan, who having

¹ This passage occurs in the final Declaration of Right, "Speeches," i. p. 126.

² Lecky, "Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland" (Henry Grattan), p. 108.

excited the admiration of the shopkeeper by the splendour of his dress and the loftiness of his pretensions, pays his bill by flinging down a counterfeit guinea and scorns to wait for the change.”¹

In a criticism of Grattan's first speech on legislative independence we have seen something of the way in which, by drawing upon his “rich wardrobe of words,” he attempted to cover some very loose arguments. Indeed, for sustained and convincing reasoning, it was generally considered that his oratory could not compare with that of Flood, who was an exponent of the older and less ornate style of Irish public speaking.² Although Grattan's conversation in private life was peculiarly distinguished by its delicate irony, yet his public speeches seem to have lacked all the lighter forms of wit and gentle humour, a defect which rendered his invective the more pitiless and scathing.

A raucous voice, ungraceful gestures, and extraordinary delivery would have made any common speaker ridiculous in a public assembly. O'Connell used to say that the motions of Grattan's arms, when he became impassioned, was like the rolling of a ship

¹ “Dublin University Magazine,” vol. vii. (Gallery of Illustrious Irishmen, Grattan).

² The style of Grattan's oratory, however, underwent a change in the later portion of his career, and it was noticed that his speeches in the English House of Commons gained in reasoning power what they had lost in imagery.

in a storm, and Byron, who believed that Demosthenes had found his superior in the great Irishman, spoke of his "harlequin delivery."¹ Yet it is not improbable that these peculiarities, by embodying the energy and intense earnestness of the man, served to intensify rather than the reverse the magnetic influence which his eloquence exercised over the listeners.

The most competent judges have assigned to Grattan's oratory, with all its defects, a place as high as that which Lord Brougham claimed for it. "Among the orators, as among the statesmen of his age, Mr Grattan occupies a foremost rank; and it was the age of the Pitts, the Foxes, and the Sheridans. His eloquence was of a very high order, all but of the very highest; and it was eminently original."²

¹ MacCarthy's "Henry Grattan," p. 34.

² In studying Grattan's speeches it must be remembered that they suffer greatly from imperfect reporting.

CHAPTER VI

THE DUBLIN CONVENTION—PARLIAMENTARY REFORM—THE CONDITION OF IRELAND

By the end of the year 1783 the Volunteers had become a source of uneasiness to many of the sincere friends of Ireland's new Constitution. The fears of Grattan have been already noticed, and they were shared to a greater degree by such a genuine lover of liberal principles as Charles James Fox, who was now a member of the famous Coalition Ministry. His sentiments were expressed in a remarkable letter which he wrote at this time to the Viceroy, Lord Northington, and which in its directness and easy style contrasts strangely with the formal and guarded despatches of previous ministers.

"And first with respect to the Volunteers and their delegates," he writes, "I want words to express to you how critical, in the genuine sense of the word, I conceive the present moment to be: unless they dissolve in a reasonable time, Government, and even

the name of it, must be at an end." He counselled the Lord-Lieutenant to use firmness. "If you ask me what I mean by firmness, I have no scruple in saying that I mean it in the strictest sense, and understand by it the determination not to be swayed in the slightest degree by the Volunteers, not even to attend to any petition that may come from them."¹

Lord Northington, however, replied that he conceived that the Government could do no good by actual interference, and that Fox's object could best be obtained by sowing dissension in the ranks of the Volunteers, and trusting to the legislature to assert its own dignity. His policy was on the whole justified by the event. No official opposition was made to the Dublin Convention of Volunteers, which began its sittings on 10th November 1783, with the object of agitating for Parliamentary reform. At the outset there seemed grave cause for alarm in the character of the man who appeared likely to have the greatest influence with the delegates. The Earl of Bristol, Bishop of Derry, ranks with the Earl of Peterborough as one of the most eccentric personalities in history. An Englishman by birth and interest, his attachment to the connection was very doubtful; a Bishop, his conduct was more than

¹ This letter is given in Grattan's "Life," iii. p. 106. See also Fox's letter to General Burgoyne on the same subject, p. 112.

unecclesiastical. He combined with the most enlightened views on religious toleration and popular representation a rashness of speech and a profession of revolutionary principles, which filled constitutional reformers like Grattan with repugnance, and which prompted Fox to call him a "madman." He had acquired great influence with the Volunteers, and on the occasion of the Convention he made a sort of triumphal entry into Dublin, magnificently dressed, and surrounded by a body of troops. The latter were under the command of his nephew, George Fitzgerald, a gentleman to whom, if the records of his life be correct, we can apply without injustice the dictum of Dr Johnson that "patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel."

But fortunately there were still influences to counteract tendencies so dangerous. Flood, in the first place, was not a man lightly to allow a movement, of which he was one of the promoters, to exceed the dictates of prudence. Charlemont and his friends had doubted whether it were the wiser policy to express open disapproval of the Convention by disavowing it altogether, or to put themselves at the head of it in the hope of moderating its councils. Eventually, however, they decided upon the latter course, and to the mortification of the Bishop of Derry, Lord Charlemont was appointed Chairman. The deliberations of the Convention, as Northington

had hoped, were marked by a great diversity of opinion, chiefly as to the expediency of admitting the Catholics to the franchise. The resolutions in favour of reform ultimately adopted were mainly drawn up by Flood. They were by no means of a startling character. The chief proposals were to throw open the rotten boroughs, to reduce the number of absentee voters, and to give the franchise to those townsmen who possessed free-holds and lease-holds of a certain value.¹ The Catholics were still to be excluded from all political power, chiefly owing to the decided views of Flood and Charlemont on the subject. Dressed in his Volunteer uniform, Flood came straight from the Convention to Parliament on 29th November, and asked for leave to bring in a bill which embodied the resolutions enumerated above. His speech contained no allusion to the body of which he was the delegate, and he made out a very good case for his proposals. The attitude of the House was, however, quickly apparent. Yelverton, who had moved the partial repeal of Poyning's Law, Bushe, who had introduced the Irish Mutiny Bill, Hutchinson, Ponsonby, Daly, and many others who had taken a prominent part in the events of 1782, all strenuously opposed him. The drift of their arguments was the same: that it was intolerable that an armed body should dictate to the Legislature, and

¹ Lecky, "XVIIIth Century," vi. pp. 343 and 344.

that if firmness was not shown parliamentary government would soon be at an end, and succeeded by a military *régime*; in whatever language, therefore, they were couched, all requests emanating from the Volunteers must be refused. Flood replied by eulogising the past services of the Volunteers, and beseeching the House to vote for the bill on its own merits. Leave to introduce it, however, was, after a long debate, refused by 157 votes to 77. The Government had awaited the conduct of Grattan on this occasion with anxiety. In his letter to Lord Northington, Fox had written: "He (Grattan) has employed a dangerous instrument for honourable purposes. Now that these purposes are fully answered by his own declaration, in the vote before alluded to, is he not peculiarly bound to take care that so dangerous a weapon should no longer remain in unskilful or perhaps wicked hands to be employed for objects as bad as his were just and honourable?" Grattan voted for the Reform Bill on its own merits, but immediately afterwards he supported a resolution moved by Yelverton that it had "become necessary to declare that this House will maintain its just rights and privileges against all encroachments whatever."

The influence of Lord Charlemont induced the Convention to dissolve itself quietly after this defeat; an address to the King, however, was first passed, expressing the ardent loyalty of the delegates to the

connection, and justifying their conduct. Danger was thus for the time at an end, but the evil which had provoked it continued undiminished. We must not indeed condemn too hastily the objects with which the Convention had been formed. The dangers of coercing Parliament by an armed body are obvious, but Flood had strong reasons for advocating such a course in this instance. He contended, as we have seen, that the only guarantee for legislative independence was a reform of Parliament, and he was right. Whether the Union was a blessing or a curse to Ireland, it is at least certain that it was effected by a wholesale system of corruption, which would have been impossible if the Volunteers had succeeded in sweeping away the chief abuses of the parliamentary system. Flood maintained that for such an aggravated disease, an heroic remedy could alone be prescribed, and he was justified to this extent, that all other methods of treatment failed.

As years passed on, the question of reform stood out with increasing prominence. Flood introduced a second bill in 1785, but, although there was no question of intimidation, it was rejected by a substantial majority. Two events which occurred at this time strongly militated against any prospect of success in this direction. The first was the appointment of Mr Fitzgibbon to the Attorney-Generalship. He was a man of great learning and greater strength

of character. In the early part of his life he had masqueraded as a Liberal, but there can be little doubt that the main bent of his mind was towards coercion. Throughout his long official career he showed himself a strenuous opponent of all attempts at Parliamentary reform, and the methods which he employed to frustrate them were wholly unscrupulous. He warmly advocated the theory and he uniformly adopted the practice of governmental corruption.

The other event above alluded to was the fall of the Coalition Ministry, and the rise to power of William Pitt, in February 1784. We shall have to notice presently the Irish schemes of this remarkable man. It is sufficient to say here that his continuance in office depended upon the support of George III. and the Tories, and that although he professed himself in favour of the purification of the Irish Parliament, he did much to make it impossible. Lord Northington was superseded as Viceroy by the Duke of Rutland, and, from the time of his establishment at the Castle, the old governmental arts gradually reappeared. By the time of his successor, the Marquis of Buckingham, they were as much practised as in the most corrupt years previous to 1782. In a single year the already swollen pension-list, that "museum of curiosities," as Curran called it, was augmented by no less than £8750,¹ and it was stated

¹ "Two Centuries of Irish History," p. 113.

in 1790 that, "out of the 300 members who composed the Irish House of Commons, there were now 108 who were in receipt of salaries or pensions from the Crown."¹

Grattan, who had given the administration of Lord Northington an independent support, now passed into the ranks of the Opposition. During the years succeeding the Convention, he brought forward again and again bills to diminish the number of placemen and pensioners, to disfranchise the Revenue and Custom-house officials, to reduce the extravagant civil-list, and generally to purify the Legislature. His efforts, however, and those of the able men who supported him, met with very limited success.

Meanwhile, the condition of the country was not altogether unsatisfactory. Material prosperity was steadily increasing. Trade was beginning to reap the fruits of the commercial concessions, and agriculture of the relaxation and partial repeal of the penal code. Industrial habits, the want of which had long operated prejudicially to progress, were being formed, old industries revived, and new ones flourished. Public credit was rising, and Ireland's finances, which a few years before had been in a deplorable condition, were now, on the whole, sound. The Legislature, moreover, impure as it was, con-

¹ Lecky, "XVIIIth Century," vi. p. 457.

tained a great number of competent and well-educated members, who displayed a laudable anxiety for the welfare of the country. Some of the reforms inaugurated in the first few sessions of the emancipated Parliament have been already noticed, and they were followed by others, usually carried in an unostentatious manner. The Corn Bounties of 1785, even if, according to modern notions of political economy, they were wrong in principle, undoubtedly gave a great impetus to agriculture, and warm encouragement was extended to better communication with England, to the improvement of roads, to the erection of public buildings, and to the promotion of the arts and the sciences. The increased importance of the Irish Parliament gave a *prestige* to the capital in which it met, and made Dublin a centre of political and social life to an extent unknown before.¹

Beneath this outward prosperity and real moral progress there was yet an undercurrent of discontent. During the comparative lull that ensued after the excitement caused by the "simple repeal" agitation and the Volunteer Convention had subsided, it was not very apparent, but it provided inflammatory

¹ See the exhaustive discussion of the material and moral condition of Ireland at this period in Lecky's "XVIIIth Century," vi. pp. 433-445; also Grattan's "Life," iii. pp. 275-279, and Doctor Sigerson in "Two Centuries of Irish History," pp. 104-109.

material, ready to be ignited by the flame of the French Revolution. Previous to 1789, it was chiefly manifested in the formation of a small republican party in Dublin, at the head of which was Napper Tandy, and in the continued deterioration of the Volunteers. That body passed by degrees out of the control of Lord Charlemont, Grattan, and the rest of those distinguished men who had once directed its movements. That it should have existed at all in a time of profound peace, when it served none of the objects for which it had originally been formed, and when it had become clear that conventions prejudiced the chances of Parliamentary reform, was in itself a condemnation. But, more than this, the majority of those who composed the corps had little in common with the original Volunteers, who were the objects of Grattan's panegyric. Their leaders were usually men of no position and doubtful patriotism, and the practice gradually grew up of admitting the lowest orders of the Roman Catholics as recruits. However much we may sympathise with the general principle of putting the Catholics on a level with their Protestant fellow-countrymen, it must be admitted that to place arms in the hands of men with no political experience and intensely ignorant, with any other object than that of defending their country against a foreign foe, was a dangerous innovation. The question of the

political emancipation of the Roman Catholics now ranked with, and was inseparable from that of Parliamentary reform, and it will be well to devote a short chapter to the condition and prospects of the ancient inhabitants of Ireland. We cannot otherwise appreciate the significance of the events which led up to the Rebellion and the Union.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONDITION AND PROSPECTS OF THE ROMAN CATHOLICS

IT is impossible to deal fairly with the difficult question of the political emancipation of the Roman Catholics without some consideration of their social condition. The strong bias of many of the accounts which have come down to us has complicated this task for historians. Probably the most impartial contemporary evidence is that of Arthur Young, whose tour in Ireland lasted from 1776 to 1779; his experiences were embodied in an account of which Miss Edgeworth said that it was "the first faithful portrait of its inhabitants."

The relaxation of the penal restrictions had enabled a fair number of the adherents of the ancient creed to prosper in trade, and they formed a not inconsiderable section of the merchant class.

The vast majority of the Catholics, however, were still connected with the land. Of these only a very small number were proprietors; the rest

swelled the ranks of that peasant class, which was politically impotent, but numerically formed more than half of the population. "The lineal descendants of great families," says Arthur Young, "once possessed of vast property, are now to be found all over the kingdom in the lowest situation, working as cottars for the great-great-grandsons of men, many of whom were of no greater account in England than these poor labourers are at present, on that property which was once their own."¹ It was upon these men that the penal code had pressed most heavily. Beneath its tyranny they had been allowed to do little more than exist, "as if to breathe were life." It is indeed possible to exaggerate the actual misery of their lot. Although they lived in wretched hovels and under insanitary conditions, a plentiful diet of milk and potatoes had made them on the whole a healthy race; their domestic life was pure, and their progeny numerous.

But to qualify men to become citizens, taking an active part in the government of a country, something more is necessary than a fine physique. Industry, intelligence, and ambition are essentials. Yet it was precisely these qualities which the circumstances of their life had the effect of dis-

¹ See Arthur Young's "Tour in Ireland," edited by Mr Hutton, ii. p. 59.

couraging. "If they succeed and make a fortune," says Young, "what are they to do with it? They can neither buy land, nor take a mortgage, nor even fine down the rent of a lease. Where is there a people in the world to be found industrious under such a circumstance?" But the chances of becoming rich at all under the existing agrarian system were very small. The chief curse of the small tenant was the class of middlemen. It had its origin in the prevalence of absentee landlordism. Nearly all the great Irish landlords were either Englishmen or Irish Protestants living in England or Dublin. They found it more convenient to let their estates to one wealthy tenant than to a number of impoverished ones, imagining, rightly or wrongly, that their rents would be paid more certainly and punctually.¹

These intermediate tenants parcelled out the land in their turn, and it was no uncommon thing for any given piece of ground to be sub-let four or five times. In this way the real landlords knew nothing of the grievances of those who actually tilled their soil. The intermediate tenants or middlemen were usually grasping men, who adopted their business with not even the secondary object

¹ Arthur Young seeks to prove that it was really to the advantage of the great landlords to dispense with the middlemen. See the chapter on "Tenantry" in vol. ii. of the "Tour."

of improving the land, but solely to make as much money as possible. From the nature of their position they had no interest in cultivating those good relations with the peasantry which are always to the advantage of an English landlord. Their sole concern with an estate was "to deduct a portion from the rent of it." So if the tenants at the bottom of the scale improved their two or three acres, the rent was at once raised; if they fell into arrears they were either evicted or forced to give free personal service to their immediate landlord. It is clear that this condition of affairs was fatal to industrial progress. Nor was the lot of labourers on the estate of a Protestant superior. Their wages might be punctually paid, but the contempt which the Protestant gentry had been trained to feel for the ancient race engendered a moral oppression subversive of that self-respect which is ever one of the most potent causes of progress. "A landlord in Ireland," says Young, "can scarcely invent an order which a servant labourer or cottar dares to refuse to execute. Nothing satisfies him but an unlimited submission. Disrespect or anything tending towards sauciness, he may punish with his cane or his horsewhip with the most perfect security; a poor man would have his bones broke if he offered to lift his hand in his own defence."¹

¹ Young, "Tour in Ireland," ii. p. 54.

The system of farming revenue was not confined to secular property. The Episcopalian clergy adopted the same method of collecting their dues, and their agents, the tithe-proctor and the tithe-farmer, were not less tyrants than the middlemen.

Throughout the entire century the payment of tithe was one of the chief grievances of both the Catholics and the Presbyterians. In the great majority of parishes the number of those who belonged to the Established Church did not form one-sixth of the population.¹ The remaining five-sixths had frequently to pay for the support of the absentee minister of an alien church. The fact that tithe was only levied on corn, potatoes, meadow, and flax, transferred the weight of its burden from the wealthy gentry to the poor Catholic agriculturists, who were least able to sustain it. Moreover, the great influence of the Protestant gentry often enabled them to evade a large assessment, and the tithe-proctor sought compensation in the lower classes.

The great speeches which Henry Grattan delivered on the Tithe question in 1788 and 1789 contained many suggestions similar to those which had been propounded by Arthur Young ten years before. He

¹ There are no census returns of this period. Dr Sigerson says : "It is calculated that the Episcopalian colonists at this period (about 1790) formed but one-tenth of the population," "Two Centuries of Irish History," p. 124.

dwelt chiefly on the inhumanity of every system of farming revenue, and the extortion and injustice that are its necessary accompaniments. This evil was the result of the neglect of their duty by many of the Episcopalian clergy, who lived in comparative ease in the principal cities upon money drawn from classes to whom they administered no spiritual consolation in return. These speeches of Grattan are remarkable for their boldness and fire. A great portion of them was taken up with a daring comparison of the lives of the Apostles with those of the Protestant ministers of his day. He contrasted the tithe-farmers visiting the Irish cabins to extort the tithe of turf and potatoes with the visit of the Apostles to the poor, bearing contributions and administering comfort. He quoted the injunctions of the Founder of Christianity, admonishing men to "give alms," to "distribute to the poor," to "seek treasure in heaven," and asked whether the luxury and avarice of the Episcopalian priesthood exemplified the observance of them. He pleaded for resident and conscientious clergy, and he recommended that the existing system of uncommuted tithe should gradually be swept away.

In April 1788, Grattan laid before the House a number of resolutions on the subject. Most of them proposed to exempt certain articles of commerce and some of the necessities of life from tithe.

The last was to the effect that "the better to secure the residence of the clergy, a moderate tax on non-residence would be expedient." The influence of the Church with the Government was, however, too strong to be successfully resisted, and the grievance was allowed to grow until many years after Grattan's death.¹

The evils of the agrarian and tithe systems do not complete the dark side of the picture. No other circumstance probably has rendered the solution of Irish problems more difficult than that hatred of law which was burnt into the Roman Catholic population in the course of the eighteenth century. The class from which the country magistrates and the grand and petty juries were drawn was precisely the one in which religious bigotry was most ingrained. They were usually men of very narrow ideas, who, living in the midst of an alien population, had come to regard themselves as a superior race of beings. Owing to their isolated position, they were not influenced by that spirit of toleration which had for some time been spreading in the towns. The execution of the more odious provisions of the penal code, which had long devolved upon them, had inevitably demoralised their sense of equity. It is not a matter for surprise, therefore, that the papist

¹ For Grattan's handling of the tithe question, see his "Life." iii. pp. 297-336 and pp. 406-414.

believed that it was useless for him to expect justice in a law court or to expose the most flagrant acts of oppression committed by a middleman or tithe-farmer. It is only fair to say that in the last quarter of the eighteenth century these evils had considerably abated. Bigotry was losing ground, even in the most remote districts; landlords were beginning to realise that they had duties to perform; the law was more impartially administered, and the worst enactments of the penal code were repealed. But it was easier to remedy evils than to remove the consequences of their existence in the past. Those consequences confront England to-day, and they proved a great obstacle in the way of the political emancipation of the native race. To sum up, we may say that the agrarian system had destroyed industry among the Catholics, the ecclesiastical system had nurtured their hatred of the Established Church, and the unfair administration of justice had filled them with a taste for illegal organisations, which seems to be nearly incurable.

On the subject of emancipation there was great diversity of opinion among the chief Irish Whigs. Some of them were disposed to lay stress on the manifest unfairness of excluding three-fourths of the nation from all share in her government, others on the danger of admitting them to political power in their existing condition. The chief exponents of the

former view were Grattan and Curran, of the latter Flood and Charlemont. The two last-named statesmen had, as we have seen, prevented all mention of Catholic suffrage in the Reform Bill drawn up by the Dublin Convention of Volunteers, and as long as Flood exercised a strong influence in the popular councils the question was kept in the background. He was convinced not only of the unfitness of the Catholics, in their present state, for the franchise, but of the incompatibility of their possession of it with the existence of the Established Church. Chiefly on that ground he was opposed to all concessions of political power to the Catholics, advocating at the same time a complete toleration of their religion, and an equality of opportunities to members of all creeds in commerce and most of the professions.

To this view Grattan's main objection was that liberty, whether civil or religious, could rest on no sound basis but that of political power. He was also convinced that the gradual admission of the Catholics to some share in the government of the country would carry with it no danger to the political ascendancy of the Protestants, and none to the Established Church. It may appear to us rather extraordinary that he should have arrived at this last conclusion ; but there are passages in Grattan's speeches which show that he expected Roman Catholicism to decline in numbers and vitality. It must not be imagined that

he was in favour of throwing the gates of power open to the mob. It was significant of the strong vein of conservatism in his nature that he steadily maintained that property should be the chief qualification for the franchise, and he argued that only those Catholics should have votes who, from their position, were presumably fit to use them well. We shall now be in a better position to trace the development of the questions of Parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation. They were the tests of the Constitution of 1782, and upon their settlement largely depended its permanency.

CHAPTER VIII

GRATTAN'S PARLIAMENT—DANGERS OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION

HITHERTO we have not entered into much consideration of the value of Ireland's new Constitution, except to mark the moral effects which the struggle to obtain it had upon the nation. Of more permanent importance was the question of the advantages, the defects, and the dangers inherent in it. The Commercial Propositions of 1785, and the Regency question of 1788 threw a light upon its working which was carefully observed by more than one statesman in England.

The history of the Commercial Propositions was briefly as follows: Many of the Irish manufacturers were disappointed with the results of the concessions of 1778. Much indeed had been granted. Ireland was now excluded only from the Asiatic trade of the Empire, which was still monopolised by the East India Company, and she was allowed to make commercial treaties with any foreign country. The

grievances of her manufacturers lay in the fact that while England adhered to her traditional policy of a prohibitive tariff on nearly all imported articles, Ireland practised a system of Free Trade, the natural result of her previous antagonism to English commercial principles, and of the teaching of her many eminent political economists.¹ Free Trade could not combat Protection when the latter was supported by greater capital and by superior skill and industry. In spite of a general increase in prosperity, the fact remained that English manufactures circulated widely in Ireland, while Irish linen was the only article which found ready access to England. It was not unnatural under these circumstances that Irish manufacturers began to demand a similar imposition of prohibitive duties on English goods. Yet if this course was adopted a commercial war between the two Parliaments would follow, and the relations between England and Ireland become seriously strained. To prevent these potential evils Pitt, who was carrying out his pre-revolution policy of reform, adopted the Commercial Propositions. They were brought forward by Mr Orde, Chief Secretary to the Duke of Rutland, in the form of resolutions, and were to the effect that :

(1.) Goods might be imported into England by way

¹ The principles of Hutchinson, Burgh, and Sir James Caldwell have been stated above.

of Ireland, and into Ireland by way of England without increase of duty.

(2.) Duties imposed by England and Ireland on each other's produce and manufactures should be equalised.

(3.) Each country should give the goods of the other a preference over those imported from abroad.

(4.) In any year when the "hereditary revenue" of Ireland exceeded a certain sum (afterwards fixed at £656,000) the surplus should be devoted to the support of the Imperial Navy.

Briefly stated, this scheme of Pitt proposed a free trade between the two countries; it offered Ireland participation in the benefits of the Empire, if she would consent to bear a share of its burdens.

The proposals, on the whole, met with Grattan's approval. He was entirely in favour of the settlement on a firm basis of the delicate commercial question, but in his jealous care for that constitution which Ireland owed largely to his efforts, he regarded with some dislike the clause which bound his country to pay a tribute to the Imperial Treasury. This, however, he was willing to concede on one condition—that no contribution should be made in any year when the expenses of government exceeded the revenue. It was so important to the administration to enlist Grattan's powerful support that Mr Orde consented to make the alteration which he desired, and little

further opposition was encountered in the Irish Parliament. The measure, as it stood when it was proposed in the British House of Commons, must be described as both expedient and fair. It was expedient, because it was most important that a question which had often worn a menacing aspect should be settled, "while," to quote Lord Rosebery's words, "the new institutions in Ireland and their undergrowth of tendencies were still plastic, before gristle had hardened into bone."¹ It was fair, because the "hereditary revenue" chiefly consisted of custom dues and taxes, which were the criterion of the prosperity of trade, and therefore, as Pitt said, "If Ireland does not grow richer by the participation of our trade . . . she will by this scheme contribute nothing. If she does grow richer by the participation of our trade, surely she ought to contribute, and the measure of that contribution cannot, with equal justice, be fixed in any other proportion."²

But although this statesmanlike measure was very ably advocated by Pitt himself in the English House of Commons, it speedily became evident that it could only be passed there at a considerable risk to the Ministry. An outbreak of commercial selfishness occurred similar to that which had ruined the

¹ Lord Rosebery's "Pitt," p. 70.

² Letter of Pitt quoted in Lecky, "XVIIIth Century," vi. p. 394.

proposals of Lord North ten years before.¹ The old argument that English trade would be ruined by the cheapness of labour in Ireland and similar contentions were brought forward, and marshalled in specious array by Fox and Sheridan. Finding at last that he could not pass his bill in its original form, Pitt remodelled and added to the propositions. The changes made were not in Ireland's favour. Several new restrictions were to be imposed on her trading powers, and she was to be required to enact all navigation laws passed in the British Parliament.² Thus amended, the propositions were agreed to by the English Assembly, in spite of the strenuous opposition of Fox, who, in a sentence admirably calculated to arouse the hostility of both nations, exclaimed, "I will not barter English commerce for Irish slavery." But the alterations which procured the success of the measure in the one legislature implied its failure in the other. When it was introduced into the Irish House of Commons in its new garb, the attitude of many influential members was seen to have been reversed. Grattan in particular, who had called the original propositions "open, fair, and just," denounced them, when remodelled, in his most vehement manner. He was touched in his most sensitive place. He

¹ It is interesting to notice that Lord North supported the Whigs in their opposition to Pitt.

² Erskine May's "Constitutional History," ii. p. 531.

declared that the Bill, if passed, would re-introduce the principle of slavery into the Constitution of Ireland.

"You should guard your Constitution," he said, "by settled maxims of honour, as well as wholesome rules of law; and one maxim should be, never to tolerate a condition which trenches on the privileges of Parliament, or derogates from the pride of the island. I beseech you . . . to contemplate the powers of your own country, before you agree to surrender them. Recollect that you have now a right to trade with the British plantations, in certain articles, without reference to British duties . . . that you have a right to take the produce of foreign plantations, subject to your own unstipulated duties; that you have a right to carry on a free and unqualified trade with the United States of North America."¹

The majority on the first stage of the bill was so small that Mr Orde withdrew it.

The failure of this measure had more than one disastrous consequence. In the first place, it seemed to show that a satisfactory commercial settlement between the two countries was impossible. But more important than this was the fact that Pitt was placed in such a humiliating situation, that he was henceforth very loath to deal with Irish questions at all. The awkward position of an

¹ Grattan's "Life," iii. p. 263.

Executive Minister trying to control two legislatures when they were opposed to one another was strongly emphasized.¹

As Lord Rosebery says, "It is difficult to avoid the impression that there has been throughout the past history of England and Ireland a malignant fate waving away every auspicious chance, and blighting every opportunity of beneficence as it arises."²

Towards the end of 1788 George III. became insane, and incapable of discharging the duties of the throne. The question of the Regency was at once made a party matter. Filial affection had never been the strong point of the House of Hanover, and it seemed certain that when the Prince of Wales assumed the reins of power, he would discharge Pitt and his father's political friends, in favour of Fox and the Whigs, the objects of George III's special detestation.³

The opinions of Pitt and Fox on the constitutional method of procedure were, therefore, dictated by personal considerations. Pitt admitted that the Prince of Wales had a moral claim to

¹ For the correspondence on this subject, see Lord Ashbourne's "Pitt: Some Chapters of his Life and Times," iv.

² Lord Rosebery's "Pitt," p. 75.

³ Fox actually wrote about this time: "I think it certain that in about a fortnight we shall come in."

be Regent, but insisted that the powers ordinarily exercised by the Crown should be curtailed. The Regent should be restricted from granting peerages or generally from making changes which could not be easily unmade by the King on his recovery. These restrictions could only be imposed by a bill, and to surmount the difficulty presented by the King's incapacity to give his assent to it, Pitt adopted a legal fiction, by which the impress of the Great Seal was to be considered equivalent to the royal signature. Fox, on the other hand, urged that the Regent ought to possess the full powers of the Crown, and that it was Parliament's duty to request him to take them over by address.

The motives of the Irish Parliament in supporting the contentions of the Opposition rather than those of the Ministry are fairly clear. It occurred to the great borough-owners that it would be politic to conciliate the future Regent, but other arguments weighed with Grattan and his party. They admitted that the Regent of England was, *ipso facto*, Regent of Ireland, but they denied that his powers must necessarily be the same in both cases. The Irish Parliament, they urged, had no concern with the restrictions which the English Legislature might think fit to impose upon him, nor with the method of procedure which it might choose to adopt. In other words, they were unwilling to

sanction a course which might seem to admit the subordination of the Irish to the English Parliament. Grattan probably had an additional motive for opposing Pitt. The Prince of Wales at this time professed himself a strong Whig, and an ardent lover of Irish liberty.¹ Grattan had not yet learnt to estimate the promises of the "first gentleman of Europe" at their proper value, and he was naturally anxious to please, for his country's sake, one who might prove a powerful ally to her. Fitzgibbon, who had now become Chancellor, urged the Legislature to adopt the plan of the Ministry. "It is a wise maxim," he said, "for this country always to concur with the Parliament of Great Britain, unless for very strong reasons indeed we are obliged to differ from it. . . . Constituted as it is, the Government of this country never can go on unless we follow Great Britain implicitly in all regulations of Imperial policy. . . . The only security of your liberty is your connection with Great Britain, and gentlemen who risk breaking the connection must make up their minds to a union."² Grattan, however, ridiculed his suggestions. Were the people of Ireland to be told—"Wait for the

¹ At this time the Prince of Wales said to Mr. Pelham: "Tell Grattan that I am a most determined Irishman."—"Life," iii. p. 373.

² Lecky, "XVIIIth Century," vi. p. 425.

determinations of another country and echo them ; wait for the great seal of that country (your King!)—register—recite!’ This is incensing one country against another, and making the British name an organ for threats, not arguments—denunciations, not affection.”¹

An address to the Prince was, therefore, agreed upon, and laid before the Viceroy, the Marquis of Buckingham, who replied that he was unable to transmit it. Parliament thereupon passed a vote of censure upon him, and appointed a commission to present the address to the Prince. Fortunately, at this critical moment, the King recovered his reason. The *contretemps*, however, was of far more than transient importance. It still further alienated Pitt’s sympathies from Ireland, and it revealed the possibility of a dangerous disagreement between the two Parliaments upon some supremely important imperial issue.

Before we proceed further, we must note the exit from the stage of Irish politics of a man who had long played there an important and in many respects an honourable rôle. Henry Flood cordially co-operated with Grattan in opposing the amended propositions, but he soon afterwards migrated from the Irish to the English House of Commons. The peculiar style of oratory of which he was an exponent

Grattan’s “Life,” iii. p. 364.

was not in favour in the latter assembly, and he achieved no success to compensate him for the disappointments of his later Irish career. We have seen something of his life-work. His patriotism was not of the "transparent purity" of Grattan's, nor was his genius so dazzling. But a study of his life will convince most men that he possessed many of the qualities which go to the making of a great statesman, and that his splendid talents, although their use was sometimes perverted by an irritable temper and a morbid sensitiveness, were, on the whole, employed in the true interests of Ireland. In answer to the great speech of Lord Clare in 1800 in favour of the Union, Grattan delivered a reply which contained a brilliant description and defence of the distinguished men who had helped him to create the Constitution of 1782. In the category occurred the name of Flood, and although the panegyric pronounced over him by his great rival has become almost hackneyed by quotation, it is so true in itself, and it throws such light on the impartiality of Grattan's mind, when not inflamed by the passions of debate, that its insertion here may perhaps be pardoned :

"Mr Flood, my rival, as the pamphlet calls him—and I should be unworthy the character of his rival if in his grave I did not do him justice—He had his faults, but he had great powers, great public effect ;

he persuaded the old, he inspired the young; the Castle vanished before him; put into his hand a distaff, and, like Hercules, he made sad work of it but give him the thunderbolt, and he had the arm of a Jupiter; he misjudged when he transferred himself to the English Parliament; he forgot that he was a tree of the forest, too old and too great to be transplanted at fifty; and his seat in the British Parliament is a caution to the friends of union to stay at home and make the country of their birth the seat of their action.”¹

¹ Grattan's "Life," v. p. 151.

CHAPTER IX

CORRUPTION — INFLUENCE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION ON IRISH POLITICS—CATHOLIC RELIEF.

THE position of Buckingham after the vote of censure passed upon him was intolerable, but before he left Ireland he made strenuous efforts to strengthen that system of corruption which, according to the Irish Administration, was the only way to govern the country under the Constitution of 1782. After the events related in the last chapter, Pitt was more ready than before to acquiesce in the traditions of Dublin Castle. During the last four months of his Viceroyalty Buckingham actually promoted nine peers, created seven, and added an annual charge of £13,000 to the pension-list.¹

The announcement of his successor, the Earl of Westmorland, that he intended to tread in his footsteps, was the signal for Grattan and his political associates to renew their campaign against corruption

¹ Lecky, "XVIIIth Century," vi. p. 429.

on a grander scale. They had lost the powerful aid of Flood, but his place was in a great measure supplied by Curran, one of the many Irishmen whose brilliant public careers have been embittered by unhappy private lives.¹ At this time the celebrated Whig Club was formed by Grattan, Charlemont, and Ponsonby. Its principal object was to preserve the Constitution of Ireland, "as settled by the Revolution in Great Britain and Ireland in 1688, and re-established in Ireland, 1782," from ministerial machinations. On 1st February 1790 Grattan delivered one of the most powerful of all his orations upon the fatal effects of Governmental corruption. He first quoted the opinions of some of the most eminent political philosophers: "Mr Locke," he said, "who established and rooted the Revolution in the minds of the English, maintains that an attempt on the part of the executive power to corrupt the Legislature, is a breach of trust, which, if carried into a system, is one of the causes of the dissolution of the Government." With a depth of reasoning not to be found in all his speeches Grattan proceeded to point out the great difference between corruption in England

¹ For an estimate of the talents and eloquence of this distinguished man, see Grattan's "Life," iii. 417-427, and Lecky, "Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland," pp. 153-156. There are some good anecdotes of him in Sir Jonah Barrington's "Personal Sketches," pp. 214-225. See also Lord Cloncurry's "Recollections," pp. 142-145.

and corruption in Ireland.' In England, he said, there are acts "which disable the Crown from splitting commissions to multiply placemen; acts which disqualify all persons holding offices created since a certain period from sitting in Parliament; acts which disable all commissioners of customs, of excise, stamps' collectors—in short, the whole tribe of the revenue, from sitting in Parliament; acts which disqualify all pensioners during pleasure from sitting in Parliament; . . . acts which disable the Crown from exceeding a certain sum in grants of pensions;" none of these acts were suffered to pass in Ireland, nor were there those great external checks on corruption which existed in England, "no sturdy tribune of a constitutional public—no check in an independent nobility." He stated with admirable clearness the composition of the House of Commons. "Above two thirds of the returns to this House are private property—of those returns many actually this very moment sold to the Minister; the number of placemen and pensioners sitting in this House equal to near one-half of the whole efficient body; the increase of that number within these last twenty years greater than all the counties in Ireland."¹ A few days later in the strongest terms² he charged the

¹ This speech is given in Grattan's "Life," iii. pp. 443-448.

² The boldness of Grattan's language on this occasion may be seen from the following quotation: "I repeat these charges

Administration with having sold three peerages, which he termed an "impeachable offence." The hide of a courtier, however, is proverbially thick. One measure of reform after another was steadily rejected, and in the elections of 1790 the Government again secured a substantial majority, although in Dublin itself the Whigs gained a great triumph by the return of Lord Henry Fitzgerald and Grattan over the heads of the ministerial nominees.

In the meantime, an event had occurred which was attracting the attention of all classes of mankind. In 1789 the French Revolution began, that political earthquake which completely changed the course of European history. Its effect upon Ireland may be summarised as follows: There had long existed among the Presbyterians of Ulster and the commercial classes of Dublin a smouldering fire of republicanism, which needed only fuel to transform it into a dangerous conflagration. The independent now; and if anything more severe was on a former occasion expressed, I beg to be reminded of it, and I will again repeat it. Why do not you expel me now? Why not send me to the bar of the House of Lords? Where is your adviser? Going out of this House I shall repeat my sentiments, that His Majesty's Ministers are guilty of impeachable offences; and advancing to the bar of the Lords, I shall repeat these sentiments; or, if the Tower is to be my habitation, I will there meditate the impeachment of these Ministers, and return—not to capitulate, but to punish."—Grattan's "Life," vol. iii. p. 457.

spirit of the Presbyterians had been shown by the great number of hardy emigrants who had left the shores of Ulster during the second and third quarters of the eighteenth century, unable to brook the restrictions imposed upon their sect. Their political ideals had been manifested by their keen sympathy with the claims of the American colonists, by their strenuous efforts to establish the Constitution of 1782, and by their dissatisfaction when they found that legislative independence was not followed by the reform of Parliament or a decline of English influence. It is, therefore, not surprising that they eagerly embraced the principles of the Jacobins, and warmly responded to that message from France: "All governments are our enemies, all peoples are our friends." From this time they gradually became imbued with the idea that parliamentary reform must be effected, even if at the expense of the connection with England.

This was the guiding principle of the Society of United Irishmen, founded at Belfast in 1791. Separation from England was not indeed its avowed object, and we may perhaps credit the statement of its three leaders, O'Connor, Emmet, and Macnevin, that if they could have obtained reform they would have remained loyal.¹ But the point to be noticed is that with them reform came before loyalty, whereas

¹ Lecky, "Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland" (Henry Grattan), p. 140.

with Grattan and the Whig Club loyalty came before reform. We have it, moreover, on his own authority that Wolfe Tone, the founder of the society, believed from the outset that separation from England was desirable for Ireland,¹ and it is probable that by 1793 many United Irishmen were in correspondence with French agents.² The most alarming feature of the movement consisted in the fact that the Ulster enthusiasts began to couple the emancipation of the Catholics with Parliamentary reform, the better to effect their objects. A pamphlet, entitled the "Northern Whig," which had a large circulation, urged that an alliance between the Catholics and the Presbyterians was the best method of effecting a reform, and many resolutions to the same effect were passed by the Ulster Volunteer Corps. These invitations were in some degree responded to by the Catholic leaders, and it was observed with alarm that the *personnel* of the Catholic Committee was changing. In 1791 Lord Kenmare and many of the influential gentry seceded from it, and left the management of its affairs in the hands of men whose loyalty was more open to question.

The course of events greatly alarmed Grattan. No man was more ardently in favour of the purification of Parliament and the emancipation of

¹ Lecky, "XVIIIth Century," vi. p. 467.

² *Ibid.*, p. 537.

the Catholics, but he had no sympathy with republican enthusiasm. Throughout his life he was a Whig of the school of Rockingham and Burke, a friend of constitutional reform, an ardent admirer of the Revolution of 1688, and the enemy of democracy. He shared to a considerable degree the views of Burke upon the sinister influence of the French Revolutionists. "Touch not this plant of Gallic growth," he told the people of Ireland, in characteristic phraseology, "its taste is death, though 'tis not the tree of knowledge."¹

But he was not the only statesman who foresaw the dangers of an alliance between the Catholics and the Presbyterians. Pitt had perceived them too, and he now formed the plan of separating the two bodies by conceding the Catholic claims. He had a great obstacle to surmount. The Lord-Lieutenant, the Chancellor, and the Irish Administration generally, received the first communications of the Ministry with alarm and indignation. Their objections fell under two heads:—

(1.) They urged that it was absurd to expect the Irish Protestant Parliament to confer political power upon the Roman Catholics and yet to remain attached to the Ministry, which compelled it to act contrary to its inclinations.

¹ Grattan's "Life," iv. p. 36.

(2.) They protested that the proposed change would be attended by great danger to the connection. Their argument was briefly this: England governed Ireland through the Protestant ascendancy, and to destroy that ascendancy by the admission of the Catholics to the franchise and to Parliament would be to destroy the only guarantee for the country's loyalty. The Catholics were the native race; once possessed of political power, they would claim, firstly their confiscated estates, and eventually the confiscated liberty of their land.

Pitt by no means shared their fears, but in deference to the Castle he relinquished a large part of his programme. Something, however, was granted to the Catholics in 1792. The legal profession, with the exception of its highest offices, was thrown open to them, and all educational restrictions were removed.

But soon the rapid growth of revolutionary principles in the North of Ireland induced Pitt to revert to his original plan. He had now the good fortune to enlist the sympathies of his royal master. At last it had dawned upon the mind of George III. that there must be some slight merit in Roman Catholicism, for on the Continent it was forming the strongest bulwark against Jacobinism, which was to the King a positive nightmare. To prevent its growth within his own dominions, he was willing to sacrifice his most cherished religious prejudices.

At the end of 1792 delegates from the first Roman Catholic Convention held in Ireland arrived in London, bearing a petition to the King for complete emancipation. Grattan, who was in England at the time, used all his influence on their behalf, and they were graciously received. The outcome was that the Viceroy's speech, which opened the first session of 1793, recommended the House to take the position of His Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects into consideration. When the friends of the Castle found that the Ministry's intentions were unalterable they made no serious resistance. Fitzgibbon, the Chancellor, indeed, denounced the project with unconcealed resentment, and there were probably many members who secretly sympathised with him. But, on the whole, if we except the great borough-owners and the Episcopalian clergy, who believed that their own ascendancy was threatened, Protestant feeling seems to have been in favour of emancipation. Grattan had purposely kept the question outside the sphere of party politics, and in this way he won the support of many of his political opponents. The main concessions to the Catholics were—

(1.) The electoral franchise and the right to vote for civic magistrates.

(2.) The right to carry arms.

(3.) The right to hold, with certain reservations civil, magisterial, and military offices.

Pitt yielded to the prejudices of the Irish Administration on one highly important point.¹ The right to sit in Parliament was still withheld from the ancient race. It was upon this defect that Grattan chiefly enlarged, and it was admirably exposed by another prominent Liberal, Sir Lawrence Parsons. The latter pointed out that the measure admitted to the franchise a host of ignorant men² peculiarly liable to fall under the influence of agitators, while it excluded from Parliament the Catholic gentry, whose loyalty was proved, whose influence with their poorer co-religionists was considerable, and whose number was so small that

¹ It has been asserted by many Irishmen, some of them well educated and distinguished men, that in passing this Relief Act the Government was actuated by sinister motives. (See, for instance, the views of Lord Cloncurry in his "Life and Times," pp. 27-29.) A study of Pitt's dealings with Ireland, however, although it affords more than one instance of culpable conduct, should convince an unbiased mind that he was invariably desirous of consulting what he considered the best interests of the country. An attempt will be made to bring this out in the chapter on the Union.

² The Protestant franchise had long been democratic, viz. all who possessed forty-shilling freeholds were allowed to vote. The Relief Act was founded on the principle that "nothing was so dangerous in a State as an unequal distribution of constitutional privileges," but by enfranchising all Catholic forty-shilling freeholders, political power was given to a great number of men who were undoubtedly unfit to use it well.

they could not possibly threaten the Protestant character of the Legislature. "In short," said Parsons, "there never was a measure pretending to be a great one more narrowly conceived than the present bill. It courts the Catholic rabble and insults the Catholic gentry. It gives power to those who are ignorant, and therefore dangerous, and withholds it from those who are enlightened, and therefore safe."¹ We must concede a large amount of truth to this point of view. The principle of the bill ran counter to two of Grattan's strongest convictions—firstly, that Parliament should reflect only the educated sentiment of the nation, and secondly, that the sympathy of the Catholic gentry should be enlisted by every means on the side of order and authority. It is, of course, easy to be wise after the event, but there is certainly good reason to believe that a measure more carefully prepared, more comprehensive in its scope, and more graduated in its concessions, might have finally settled a question which was destined to be the curse of Ireland for more than thirty years, and the consequences of which are fatally evident to-day.

¹ A *resumé* of Parson's speech is given in Lecky, "XVIIIth Century," vi. pp. 575-584.

CHAPTER X

VICEROYALTY OF EARL FITZWILLIAM— THE REBELLION

THE year 1794 was a critical one for Ireland. The disloyalty in the North was spreading; the remnants of the Volunteer Corps were merging into the body of United Irishmen; at Belfast, Newry, and other large towns in Ulster military organisations of a suspicious character were coming into being. The restlessness of the times was also exercising a pernicious influence on the lower orders of society, manifested in the revival of religious feuds and a general outbreak of lawlessness. Yet there were not wanting some re-assuring signs. The majority of the Catholic priests denounced the levelling spirit of Jacobinism, and among their flocks, although there was much discontent, there was still little disaffection. The political agitation in the North and the social disturbances in the South and West were as yet two distinct movements. To keep them apart was

essential to Ireland's peace. Prompt and vigorous action was necessary, for Wolfe, Tone, and the leaders of the United Irishmen were doing their best to unite the elements of discontent. By admitting the Catholic gentry to the Legislature, by gradually removing the abuses of the agrarian and the ecclesiastical systems, and by cutting off the sources of the corruption which was ruining the efficacy of Parliament, two excellent results were likely to be obtained. Firstly, the Catholic population would cease to have an interest in the subversive designs of the Presbyterians, and secondly, the Ministry would gain the whole-hearted support of Grattan and his colleagues, who represented the most loyal, the most disinterested, and probably the most influential elements of Protestantism.

In a strong policy directed to these ends lay, as far as we can judge, the best hope of averting that rebellion which, in an unmistakable manner, was casting its shadow before it. Such a policy, as the year advanced, did it seem more and more probable that Pitt intended to pursue. In July the Portland Whigs joined the Ministry. According to their professions, they seceded from Fox's party solely on the question of the French War, their principles on all other matters remaining unaltered. The Duke of Portland, who was known in Ireland as a champion of the Catholic Cause, became Secretary of

State for the Home Department, which included the management of Irish affairs. This was in itself construed as a favourable sign, but when it was known that Lord Fitzwilliam, the most liberal of all the seceding Whigs, was to succeed the Earl of Westmorland as Viceroy, and that he had invited the cordial co-operation of Grattan in his coming tenure of office, intense excitement began to prevail in Ireland. Grattan himself seems to have been a little incredulous at first, and he journeyed to London in mingled hope and fear. His sojourn there was calculated to dispel his doubts. He did not confine himself to consulting with Fitzwilliam, but had two important interviews with Portland and Pitt. Both of them made statements to him, which are given by the younger Grattan, on his father's authority, as their exact words. Portland said: "I have taken office, and I have done so because I know there is an entire change of system."¹ Pitt referred to the subject of emancipation in the following terms: "Not to bring it forward as a Government measure, but if Government were pressed, to yield it."²

So far, all seemed satisfactory. The first hitch occurred shortly before the departure of Fitzwilliam, when he was suddenly given to understand by Pitt that the change of administration must not involve,

¹ Grattan's "Life," iv. p. 174.

² *Ibid.*, p. 177.

ipso facto, the dismissal of any servant of Lord Westmorland's Government, and under no circumstances of Fitzgibbon, the Chancellor. The Whigs received these tardy injunctions with indignation, and Burke, who had watched the development of affairs with interest, declared that "with sorrow inexpressible" he was forced to the conclusion that Fitzwilliam should decline on such conditions to undertake his task. The sequel justified his opinion.

The new Viceroy was warmly welcomed on his arrival in Dublin (January 1795). He found the country in a state of jubilant expectation. Addresses asking for total emancipation poured in from the Catholic Committee and other bodies. The star of Grattan rose again in the ascendant, a phenomenon which always implied that moderate councils were prevailing with the nation. Seldom had England needed the loyalty of Ireland more than at this moment, when the fortunes of the allies were trembling in the balance.¹ Parliament was to meet on 22nd January, and during the fortnight preceding the Viceroy wrote numerous letters to Pitt and Portland, warning them in terms which grew stronger as the days passed on, that although he was doing his best to secure a delay, it would not, in his opinion, be either just or politic long to resist the Catholic claims,

¹ The French War, which had begun in 1793, had reached a most critical stage in the year 1795.

supported as they were by a considerable and influential section of the Protestants. At the outset of his Viceroyalty he took the important step of dismissing Cooke, the Secretary of War, and Beresford, a Commissioner of Revenue, on the ground that he could not work with subordinates entirely opposed to a system of conciliation. Beresford, in particular, was the chief member of a family cabal, which monopolised a large portion of Government influence, and consistently used it to resist all healing measures. But although the English Ministry can have had no doubt as to the course which Fitzwilliam was pursuing, not a word of remonstrance reached him until after Parliament had met, until after Grattan had pledged the country to a warm-hearted support of the war, and, on the strength of the expected concessions, had carried a vote of £200,000 for the British Navy. At last, when the Viceroy had irrevocably committed himself, did Portland, on 8th February, admonish him to give no encouragement to the Catholics, and Pitt, on the 9th, expostulate with him for dismissing Beresford. Ten days later he was recalled, but not before Grattan had actually obtained his leave to introduce the expected bill. It has been necessary to describe this event in detail, for it forms one of the most disputed and disastrous passages in the history of Ireland, a history in which disputed and disastrous passages occur with lamentable frequency.

Into the delicate question of the responsibility for such a terrible fiasco it is hardly within the scope of this essay to enter. Whether Fitzwilliam acted contrary to instructions in dismissing Beresford and Cooke, and whether Pitt's change of attitude was due to the machinations of those two injured gentlemen, or to a sudden discovery of the King's objections, or to his designs for a union, or to a combination of these three circumstances, are problems for the English historian and the biographer of Pitt to solve.¹ It is at least certain that Grattan was wholly free from blame in the transaction. To the manly and consistent part he played throughout we have the testimony of "the high-souled" Windham, one of the noblest members of the Cabinet. "Few public men," he wrote shortly after this crisis, "have, to my mind, given such an honourable proof of their willingness to sacrifice even their immediate political consequence—the last sacrifice that such men are in general willing to make—to the general interests of the country."²

With the ship that carried Fitzwilliam to England departed the last chance of realising Grattan's

¹ Mr Lecky and Lord Rosebery entirely disagree in their conclusions. (See Lecky, "XVIIIth Century," vii. pp. 79-89, and Lord Rosebery's "Pitt," pp. 183-185. See also "Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland," pp. 145-146, and Lord Ashbourne's "Pitt," ch. vi.)

² Lecky, "XVIIIth Century," vii. p. 105.

ideal of an united Ireland, a province of the Empire at once self-governing and enthusiastically loyal. It had become traditional for the Irish people to put the worst construction on any questionable act of a British Minister. Whatever may have been Pitt's motives in recalling Fitzwilliam, the majority of the nation concluded that they were wholly bad.¹ Thinking men came apparently to the conclusion that it was Pitt's determination, by deliberately provoking religious discord, to effect an union, a project which persistent rumour asserted that he was meditating. That conviction was strengthened when Lord Camden, the new Viceroy, raised to the earldom of Clare the man who had been chiefly distinguished by his implacable hatred of the Catholics. The majority of the peasantry did not stop to make any such analysis. They had listened for a while to the voice of Grattan telling them that their strength lay in their moderation and prudence. They now concluded that he was a false prophet, and turned to those who had long said to them :

"Hereditary bondsmen ! Know ye not,
Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow ?"

¹ To take, for instance, the sentiments of one who was taught by his father to love England : "Never in the history of any country can be found such duplicity, such treachery, and such baseness as was practised towards the people of Ireland."—Grattan's "Life," iv. p. 189.

and who counselled them that their salvation must come from France. Whatever controversy there may be as to the merits of the recall, there can be but little as to its results. The evidence on this point is very strong. The aged Lord Charlemont, whom we have known as an opponent of the political emancipation of the Catholics, asserted that by the end of the year the country might be in the hands of the United Irishmen. The three leaders of that body afterwards declared that "whatever progress this united system had made among the Presbyterians of the North, it had, as we apprehend, made but little way among the Catholics throughout the kingdom until after the recall of Earl Fitzwilliam." Finally, we have the testimony of Grattan that from this moment a spirit of sullen disloyalty spread over the land, "creeping like the mist at the heels of the countryman."

The history of the next three years is made up of a vast collection of miscellaneous and sometimes contradictory details, but its central fact is clearly the evolution of rebellion. It witnesses to the rapid development of sedition among the Roman Catholics. To have raised their hopes to the highest point only to blight them in a manner which seemed to add insult to injury would, under any circumstances, have been dangerous, but it

was fatal at a time when the French Revolution had aroused in men the wildest aspirations for freedom, and when the influence of the gentry and the priesthood had been impaired. The United Irishmen did not fail to utilise their opportunity. In 1796 they remodelled their society after the pattern of those secret brotherhoods, which had long been in vogue among the lower classes. Henceforward they gained a large number of recruits to their cause. For a time the progress of the movement was slow in Munster and Connaught, and those provinces seem to have been substantially loyal on the occasion of the French Expedition of 1796.¹ Soon afterwards, however, a rapid deterioration was noticed. Contemporaneously with the growth of the "united system," the seeds of religious animosity were scattered broadcast through the land, and the unhappy circumstances of the time had provided for them a congenial soil. The fabric of concord, which Grattan had spent the best years of his life in erecting, crumbled rapidly away. In 1795 the Orange Society was formed in Ulster, and carried on henceforward a fearful struggle with Defenderism, the corresponding Catholic organisation. Many of the northern counties, particularly Down, Armagh, and Donegal, were in a state of anarchy long before

¹ Lecky, "XVIIIth Century," vii. pp. 267-271 ; Grattan's "Life," iv. p. 263.

the Rebellion actually broke out. We may gather some idea of the horrors of that time, when we remember that the catchword of the Orangemen, "To hell or Connaught," has become a proverb, and that it was confidently believed by the Catholics throughout Ireland that the oath of admission to the Orange Society ran as follows: "I will be true to the King and Government, and I will exterminate, as far as I am able, the Catholics of Ireland."¹

The government of this frantic people was now almost entirely in the hands of the official "junto," in which Fitzgibbon was the leading spirit. To him Pitt and Portland, engrossed in imperial matters, had entrusted the management of Irish affairs, hoping, we may suspect, that he would smooth the way to a legislative union. The system adopted was one of coercion. In the interval between Fitzwilliam's recall and the outbreak of the Rebellion, the "Habeas Corpus" Act was suspended, the Insurrection Act was passed, and Ulster was placed under martial law. Severe measures were undoubtedly necessary, but the spirit which animated those measures, and the method of their execution, were not calculated to promote peace. The military were not controlled by the most ordinary rules of discipline, and were allowed to exhibit a savagery in crushing resistance which aroused the indignation of Sir Ralph Abercrombie,

¹ Lecky, "XVIIIth Century," vi. p. 369.

who for a short time was Commander-in-Chief. It is significant that Abercrombie no sooner began to protest against the barbarity practised with the tacit assent of the Government than a cabal was formed against him, which drove him into resignation.¹ He was succeeded by the less scrupulous Lake. The recklessness of Fitzgibbon's policy was exemplified in the adoption of a device which lashed the troubled waters into still greater fury. This was the indiscriminate "crimping" of suspected United Irishmen into the Navy, a course which had the additional disadvantage of introducing a seditious element into that service at a highly critical time.

In Parliament the tiny band of patriots, which contained an amount of talent out of all proportion to its size, continued its exertions for a time. The efforts of Grattan and his friends were now chiefly directed to minimising the severity of the coercive measures adopted, to reprobating the distinction drawn by the Castle between Protestant and Catholic societies,² and to introducing into Parliament those healing measures which, they affirmed, could alone cut away the roots of evil. "This country," said Grattan in one of his speeches, "can only be saved by her own force, and

¹ See the article on Sir Ralph Abercrombie in "Dictionary of National Biography."

² They especially attacked the system of recruiting the Yeomanry from the Orangemen.

her force can only be procured by adopting the Catholics, and they can only be adopted by a total change of maxims, measures, and manners, accompanied with a free and full participation of whatever privileges the Constitution can boast, and what is infinitely more essential, whatever privileges the Constitution intended. This is the force, the power, the charm, the staff of your Saint that will banish from your isle all noxious animals.”¹ Bills for Catholic Relief and Parliamentary Reform were brought forward again and again, but the Government invariably secured an overwhelming victory by their purchased majority.

It must be admitted that the mortifying position in which he was placed, powerless alike to influence Parliament or people, led Grattan to deviate for a time from that path of discretion which he had hitherto trodden. It led him to condemn almost without qualification the whole system of coercion, and to give some countenance to Fox’s denunciations of the French War. Later, he frankly acknowledged his mistake. “Our error,” he wrote,² “was in not seceding sooner; for the Opposition, I fear, encouraged the united men by their speeches against the Government. . . . I had written a letter to the citizens of Dublin that was considered imprudent—it was true—it was well written—but it tended to

¹ Grattan’s “Life,” iv. p. 252.

² *Ibid.*, p. 346 and 347.

inflammé. . . . I regret the proceedings—we were angry : it was not wise—but there is no man who in a long public life will not be guilty of some political errors.”

About the middle of 1797, Grattan, Curran, Ponsonby, and their immediate followers, adopted the wise course of seceding from an assembly which was now nothing more than a tool of the Crown. In the elections held that year for the last Parliament of Ireland, Grattan issued a farewell address to his Dublin constituents. It summed up his charges against the Administration, and concluded with a series of aspirations, which showed that his sentiments were essentially unchanged.

At last, after two abortive French expeditions, the signal for the long-expected Rebellion was given. With the painful scenes which followed we are not concerned. The system of delation organised by the Government enabled them to frustrate the designs of the United Irishmen. “Their plans were made known to the Government as soon as they were formed ; the hand that clasped them in simulated friendship had written their doom ; the lips professing the warmest zeal in their cause had sworn to their destruction.”¹

The horrors of the spy system invaded even the

¹ Introduction to Madden’s “United Irishmen,” p. 36. An interesting account of the informers is given in Fitzgerald’s “Secret Service under Pitt.”

sanctity of Tinnehinch, the home to which Grattan, broken down in health, shattered in nerve, and dejected in spirit, had retreated after his secession from Parliament. It had for some time been a cherished object of the Castle to brand with infamy a man whose denunciations of its methods had been the more forcible because his name had long been a synonym for loyalty. The Irish patriot had been shadowed for a considerable time, and in the year of the Rebellion it was announced by the Government that evidence of his complicity in the designs of the rebels had been discovered. That evidence was grotesquely insufficient,¹ and the charge was contradicted by the whole tenor of his life.

To discredit the leaders of the Opposition was, however, an important item in the policy of the Administration, and Lord Clare was not the man to suffer the reputation even of Grattan to stand in the way of his projects. The name of the great Irishman was struck off the list of Privy Councillors by the King.

In Ireland itself, for the second time in his career,

¹ To an unprejudiced mind the powerful arguments which Mr Lecky has adduced to prove (1) the worthlessness of the Government's charge, and (2) the innocence of Grattan, will be conclusive. The conclusions of the most impartial of all the historians of Ireland are far more valuable than those of any writers, however brilliant, who have approached their subject from a partisan standpoint. (See Lecky, "XVIIIth Century," viii. 255-262.)

Grattan became the victim of a violent unpopularity. By attempting to avoid extremes, he had incurred the resentment of both insurgents and loyalists. Now that he was officially stigmatised, it seemed as if the whole nation was united in disowning him. His portrait in the Examination Hall of Trinity College was replaced by that of Lord Clare, and the corporations of Dublin and Londonderry cancelled the resolutions conferring upon him the freedom of their respective cities.¹ In Dublin itself, his native town, it was hardly safe for him to appear in the streets, and he was obliged to retire for a time to the obscurity of Llanrwst in North Wales.²

The Rebellion, accompanied by terrible excesses on both sides but not unredeemed by some touching instances of humanity, was at length crushed, and the legislative union became at once the question of the hour. To effect it Lord Cornwallis was sent out to Ireland as Viceroy, a man who had rendered signal services to the Empire in a province of a very different character.

¹ Lecky's, "XVIIIth Century," viii. p. 263.

² Grattan's "Life," iv. pp. 379-383.

CHAPTER XI

THE LEGISLATIVE UNION

IT is a remarkable testimony to the truth of Mr Freeman's dictum that history is past politics and politics present history, that an event which occurred before 99 per cent. of those now living were born should still be capable of rousing some of the strongest passions in human nature. "If the dismissal of Fitzwilliam," says Lord Rosebery, "may be said to touch the rim of a volcano, the Union is the burning fiery furnace of the crater itself."¹ It will be easier to handle this treacherous subject if we remember that it involves two distinct questions: firstly the desirability of an union; and secondly, the character of the means employed to effect it; our final judgment, however, must be based on a consideration of the two issues taken together.

The best exponent of the Government's case is

¹ Lord Rosebery's "Pitt," p. 188.

Pitt himself, who was, after all, the author of the scheme, Lord Clare and Lord Castlereagh being only his agents. Now of all men Pitt was in the best position to judge of the Constitution which Grattan had secured in 1782. His public life had practically coincided with that of Ireland's unfettered Parliament.¹ During his tenure of office he had repeated opportunities of observing the working of the new arrangement, and he had come to the deliberate conclusion that it could not be permanent. A curious fatality had attended all his relations with Ireland. We have traced the process by which the Commercial propositions of 1785 had been wrecked, and we have noted the humiliating position in which Pitt had been placed by the attitude of the Irish Parliament upon the Regency question. Yet in neither case had the Irish Parliament exceeded its constitutional powers. To what then could such deadlocks be ascribed but to the inherent impossibility of two legislatures working harmoniously together under a common executive? If there was nothing which could compel the two Parliaments to assign the same powers to the Prince Regent, there was nothing which could compel them to agree upon the justice of an imperial war. In the great speech in which Pitt laid his Union proposals before

¹ Lord Ashbourne's "Pitt," p. 281.

the English House of Commons, he laid great emphasis on this point. "Suppose for instance," he said, "that the present war which the Parliament of Great Britain considers to be just and necessary had been voted by the Irish Parliament to be unjust, unnecessary, extravagant, and hostile to the principles of humanity and freedom. Would that Parliament have been bound by this country? If not, what security have we at a moment the most important to our common interest and common salvation, that the two kingdoms should have but one friend and one foe?"¹

Of all the indictments of the system of 1782 this was the most powerful, and before we pass to the other considerations which determined Pitt that a union was necessary, it will be well to ask if the opponents of that measure were able adequately to meet it. Foster, the last Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, was the greatest exponent of the case of the anti-Unionists. The speeches, indeed, which Grattan delivered in that dramatic scene which closed the life of the Irish Parliament contained some of the noblest eloquence, the sublimest pathos, and the most inspired language that ever entranced an audience. But Grattan was not in a state either of mind or body,

¹ Earl Stanhope's "Life of Pitt," vol. iii. p. 57.

when a thousand emotions of regret, of indignation, and of passion were struggling in his breast, to treat his subject dispassionately. He was, moreover, incapacitated by the nature of the case from doing so. As a father is usually not the best judge of his son, so the parent of a constitution is usually not the best judge of his own creation. The objections of Foster, on the other hand, have all the greater weight because he had on almost every other occasion supported Pitt, and had the strongest inducements to support him now. Yet it cannot be said that in the closely reasoned speech,¹ which was intended directly to answer that of the Prime Minister, Foster demonstrated that no danger to the Empire could result from the existence of two co-ordinate legislatures within it.

His two main contentions were that the Irish Parliament had as a fact enthusiastically supported Great Britain in every military enterprise, and that it was drawn from classes whose loyalty was unquestioned. The fatal objection to these arguments was that at any moment a reform of Parliament, which had seemed almost certain in 1795, would admit to political power classes recently convicted of disaffection. Even if we concede that on the supreme issue of war, unanimity might have been secured, the

¹ An analysis of Foster's speech is given in Lecky, "XVIIIth Century," viii. pp. 376-386.

danger was not over. A conflict of commercial interests had already occurred, and that it might occur on a larger scale was demonstrated by some very ill-advised words which fell from the lips of Grattan. In one of his speeches he was talking of the force which the Irish Parliament might bring to bear upon an English minister if she chose to exert it. "Does he recollect," Grattan asked, "how she could affect the British West India monopoly by withdrawing her exclusive consumption from the British plantations? Does he recollect how we could affect the Navy of England by regulations regarding our Irish provisions? Does he recollect how we could affect her Empire by forming commercial intercourse with the rest of the world?"¹ When Pitt became Prime Minister he was, in the words of Mr Morley, "fresh from Adam Smith." It was Adam Smith's opinion that the commercial differences between England and Ireland could only be settled by uniting the legislatures of the two islands. In carrying out his great scheme, Pitt was but adopting the suggestions of the deepest political thinker of his time.²

But the Union was not intended by Pitt to stand alone. It was only one of a series of changes, which was to include the political emancipation of the

¹ Ingram's "History of the Irish Union," p. 59.

² Lecky, "XVIIIth Century," viii. p. 269.

Catholics, the payment of their priests, and the removal of the iniquities of the tithe-system. He seems to have convinced himself that none of these measures could have been carried under the existing constitution without endangering the Protestant ascendancy, the maintenance of which was probably essential to the security of the connection at that time. In the speech already quoted he said: "No man can say that in the present state of things, and while Ireland remains a separate kingdom, full concessions could be made to the Catholics without endangering the State, and shaking the constitution of Ireland to its centre. On the other hand, . . . it is obvious that such a question may be agitated in an united, imperial Parliament with much greater safety than it could be in a separate legislature."¹

Having now examined the grounds of Pitt's conviction that a union was necessary, we may ask ourselves whether any other solution of the problem could have been found.

At various stages in this Essay the composition of the old Parliament of Ireland has been discussed, but it is perhaps pardonable to lay stress once more on its essentially oligarchic character. In the House of Lords there was only a small minority of peers under no obligation to support the Castle. Of the 300 members in the Lower House, 64 alone were

¹ Earl Stanhope's "Pitt," iii. p. 174.

returned by the counties, where the franchise was open to the adherents of both creeds. The remaining members represented the boroughs and the large towns. The great majority of the boroughs were the private property of peers and influential landowners, and the rest had in nearly all cases come under the patronage of one individual. In Donegal there were three electors for five boroughs; for the boroughs of Harristown and Bannow there were none at all. Equally anomalous was the state of the representation in most of the towns. Belfast, the commercial capital of the country, had only 13 electors, although Newry, a neighbouring and much smaller town, had about 700. The electorate was often the corporation, and thus peculiarly liable to fall under the influence of a nobleman. Lord Shannon, for instance, controlled the representation of Wexford.¹

Under these circumstances it is hardly surprising that the Irish Parliament had been distinguished for its loyalty. Yet in spite of the strong ties of self-interest which bound the legislature to the Castle, on two important occasions there had been a serious conflict between them. Let it be borne in mind that the old Irish Parliament had great merits. Under its sway the trade of the country, even in time of war, had advanced by leaps and bounds. It

¹ These statistics are taken from Ingram's "History of the Irish Union," pp. 28-34.

had granted a number of important concessions to the members of an alien and sometimes hostile creed. It had produced an amount of genius which any assembly in the world might have envied. But such an anomalous state of things could not have lasted for ever. The day of reckoning must have come for the Irish Parliament sooner or later, and then there must have been admitted within its walls men antecedently inclined to hate rather than to love Great Britain. If the machinery of the Constitution of 1782 had not always run smoothly when it was worked by a loyal Parliament, what might not have happened when it was in the hands of a disloyal one? The Constitution which Grattan had conceived was a machine of noble contrivance, but it was too delicate to stand the rough handling of politicians.

So far, then, we have come to the conclusion that a legislative union, considered as one of a series of healing measures, was a thing in itself by no means undesirable. That does not commit us to an approval of the course adopted.

The question naturally arises, how far were the people of Ireland in favour of a union? The country contained at that time at least four parties, with different interests and different ideas. There were, firstly, the Anglo-Irish borough-owners, who were, of course, disinclined to part with a system under which they enjoyed exceptional advantages. Secondly,

there were the Ulster Presbyterians, among whom disaffection had first taken root, but who had been largely converted in the process of religious war into fierce supporters of the Protestant Ascendency. Next, there was the great Catholic population, which, after the suppression of the Rebellion, had lapsed into a lethargic condition. Finally, there was the small body of Grattan's supporters, who were constantly recurring to "what might have been." From these discordant elements it was the policy of Lord Cornwallis the Viceroy, Lord Clare the Chancellor, and Lord Castlereagh, the Secretary of State, to form a strong phalanx of Unionists.

Very cleverly did they play their part. Mr Secretary Cooke, whom we have known as one of the victims of Earl Fitzwilliam's energy, was employed to write a pamphlet which represented the Union as adapted to suit the tastes of all parties. It seems to have had most effect in Ulster. The Orangemen of the North, tired of politics, had returned to their looms, and they were apparently greatly influenced by an argument of Cooke, that their linen trade would benefit by the Union.

The Catholics were not naturally inclined to form a closer connection with a country which had been at little pains to consider their interests in the past. At that moment, however, they hated their Protestant fellow-countrymen more than England, and they could

not view with indifference the tempting inducements to support the Union which were held out to them.

Lord Cornwallis and Lord Castlereagh constantly assured them that under the existing system they could never hope to gain full political emancipation, an abolition of the tithe-system, or any redress of their social grievances. They also informed them that in the event of a union the Cabinet agreed in considering those measures desirable, and that, although no pledge could be given, the Ministers were prepared to take their cause in hand. Under these circumstances we find that all the Roman Catholic Bishops supported the measure, and we need have little difficulty in accepting the statement of their own historian, Plowden, that "a very great preponderancy in favour of the Union existed in the Catholic body, particularly in the nobility, gentry, and clergy."

That Pitt made no definite pledge to the Catholics is probably true, but it is quite certain that he encouraged both Cornwallis and Castlereagh to make them believe that emancipation would follow a union. It is here that Pitt's conduct is most open to censure. He must have been morally convinced at this time that, without another rebellion, Catholic emancipation was impossible while George III. lived. If it had not been made clear in 1795, Pitt could have had little doubt after a

conversation which Dundas had with the King in the early part of 1799. On that occasion, referring to the Union, George III. said: "I only hope Government is not pledged to anything in favour of the Roman Catholics." Dundas replied that it was a matter for future consideration. The King then stated his notorious scruples upon the Coronation Oath, and when Dundas endeavoured to explain that the Oath did not apply to His Majesty in his legislative capacity, that model of kingly wisdom retorted: "None of your Scotch metaphysics, Mr Dundas! None of your Scotch metaphysics!"¹ And thus when the Union was passed, the Catholics found they were no better off, and before his death Pitt had definitely abandoned their cause. They considered that once again they had been duped and insulted, and the Union became a union of Parliaments and not of hearts.

It was, however, with the Legislature itself that the Castle had its most serious business to transact. It is difficult to conceive how anyone, after reading the "Cornwallis Correspondence," should come to the conclusion that the Union was carried by constitutional means, and that it was free from any taint of corruption. It is surely reasonable to presume that the Viceroy who carried that measure knew what his methods were. Lord Cornwallis

¹ Stanhope's "Pitt," iii. 178.

was a frank old soldier, and he wrote about his work in Ireland with a refreshing candour. The following are some extracts from his correspondence: "The political jobbing of this country," he writes to Major-General Ross, "gets the better of me: it has ever been the wish of my life to avoid all this dirty business, and I am now involved in it beyond all bearing, and am consequently more wretched than ever. I trust that I shall live to get out of this most cursed of all situations, and most repugnant to my feelings. How I long to kick those whom my public duty obliges me to court! If I did not hope to get out of this country, I should most earnestly pray for immediate death."¹ Writing a few weeks later to the same gentleman, he says: "My occupation is now of the most unpleasant nature, negotiating and jobbing with the most corrupt people under heaven. I despise and hate myself every hour for engaging in such dirty work, and am supported only by the reflection that without an Union the British Empire must be dissolved."² He then proceeded to apply to himself the caustic lines of Swift, beginning:

"So, to effect his Monarch's ends,
From Hell a Viceroy devil ascends,
His budget with corruption crammed,
The contributions of the damned."

¹ "Cornwallis Correspondence," vol. iii. pp. 100-101.

² *Ibid.*, p. 102.

Finally he wrote to Pitt himself: "Nothing but a conviction that an Union is absolutely necessary for the safety of the British Empire could make me endure the shocking task imposed upon me."¹

It is only possible here to enumerate some of the more drastic of the steps taken to pass the Union. During the viceroyalty of Lord Cornwallis twenty Irish peers obtained promotion, and twenty-eight new Irish peerages were created. A few of these honours were unconnected with the Union, and some may have been the reward for disinterested services, but to suppose that such an unprecedented number of promotions made during a short viceroyalty was a coincidence is idle. The case of Lord Kenmare was not exceptional. Of that gentleman the Viceroy writes: "Among the many engagements which I have been obliged to contract in the event of the success of the measure of a legislative union, I have promised to use my utmost influence to obtain an earldom for Lord Kenmare."²

The Union was first proposed in the Irish House of Commons early in 1799, and was rejected. It was not again proposed till January 1800. What happened in the interval? Eighty boroughs were bought up by the Government at the cost of over a million pounds, which sum was set down to the

¹ "Cornwallis Correspondence," iii. p. 104.

² *Ibid.*, p. 109.

nation's account.¹ As the boroughs were private property, the act was, perhaps, not one of pure corruption. It did not, however, stand alone. Within the space of that single year sixty-three out of the 300 seats in the Lower House were vacated,² and by the first session of 1800 there were in the House of Commons forty-one members who held Government offices at pleasure, exclusive of pensioners.³ Each one of those members knew what was implied in the phrase "to hold office at pleasure."

Let us take one other circumstance. When the Union was first proposed a great meeting of lawyers was convened, at which the measure was condemned by one hundred and sixty-six to thirty-two. Four years later, twenty-six out of the thirty-two composing the minority had received Government posts.⁴ Many similar facts might be adduced on unquestionable authority. Enough have been brought forward to prove that the statement of Mr Lecky⁵—"the virus of corruption extended and descended through every fibre and artery of the political system"—is no exaggeration. It must not be imagined that the

¹ Lecky, "XVIIIth Century," viii. p. 401.

² Lord Rosebery's "Pitt," p. 189.

³ There were actually 56, but over 15 the Government had no influence ("Cornwallis Correspondence," iii. p. 243.)

⁴ Lecky, "Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland" (Henry Grattan), p. 169.

⁵ Lecky, "XVIIIth Century," viii. p. 405.

Government had a monopoly of corruption. "One of the plans adopted and acted on by the Opposition," says the younger Grattan, "was to bring into Parliament members to vote against the Union; it amounted in fact to a project to outbuy the Minister, which in itself was unwise, injudicious, and almost impracticable, and in which they were sure to be far behind the Government."¹

We must not judge the conduct of either party by the standard of to-day. Lord Cornwallis was merely making excessive use of a recognised instrument of government. In the eighteenth century a Minister did not lose his political reputation by dealing in corruption any more than a gentleman lost his social reputation by habitually ending the evening on the floor. It was almost fitting that the last years of a century which had witnessed the growth of corruption into an organised system should be marked by the destruction of that system by its own methods in at least one province of the Empire. Be that as it may, two things at least are certain about the passing of the Irish Union: firstly, that the country gave no mandate to the Legislature to abolish itself;² and secondly, that that Legislature was partly cajoled,

¹ Grattan's "Life," v. p. 70.

² The last elections were held in 1797 without any reference to the Union.

partly bullied by the Government into committing suicide.

The last session of the Irish Parliament opened on 15th January 1800. Corruption had done its work among the members, but the Government had cause for some disquietude in the changed attitude of Ulster towards their measure. The Orangemen, who had at first seemed disposed to favour it rather than the reverse, were now revolting against the idea.¹ But nowhere in the kingdom was the prospect of an Union more distasteful than at Dublin itself. There all classes of the community, lawyers and merchants, Protestants and Catholics alike, had benefited by the existence of an independent Parliament in their midst. On the evening of the 15th a great number of Dublin's citizens assembled on College Green, and as the members passed by on their way to the House they were greeted with comments, complimentary or otherwise. Happy was that peer or commoner whose reputation was above reproach. The Viceroy's speech from the Throne made no reference to the all-engrossing subject, but the Government's hand was forced by Sir Lawrence Parsons, who moved an amendment pledging the House to maintain an independent Parliament in the country. It was then avowed by the Ministers that the Union stood first on their

¹ Lecky, "XVIIIth Century," viii. p. 443.

programme. The brilliance of the debate which followed was equalled only by its acrimony. Most of the old seceders had come back to take part in the final campaign. Bushe and Plunket, Fitzgerald and Ponsonby, all demonstrated the lofty height to which oratory had attained in Grattan's Parliament. On the side of the Government, Castlereagh, whose eloquence was usually of no high order, rose to the occasion in a speech of considerable merit.

But where was Grattan at this crisis in his country's fortunes? We have seen that in the year of the Rebellion he had been obliged to leave the land for which he had so earnestly striven. But rest and retirement seemed powerless to restore his health or his spirits. Stung by Ireland's ingratitude, indignant at the calumnies which had been heaped upon him, and dreading what he termed the "incipient, creeping union," he fell a victim to a distressing nervous disease. He tried North Wales, he tried Twickenham, he tried the Isle of Wight, and returned to Ireland at the end of 1799 as ill as he had left it. It seemed at first as if he would play no part in that closing tragedy. But the entreaties of his friends and of his wife, a brave lady whose services to her husband will be noticed in the concluding chapter, at last prevailed. The death had lately occurred of one of the members for Wicklow, which was a nomination borough. The seat was purchased for

Grattan, and by the good offices of the Sheriff, the election was held after twelve o'clock on the night of the 15th. The writ was brought to Grattan's house in Dublin about five o'clock in the morning. "I shall never forget," says Mrs Grattan, in a touching account which she gave of this incident, "the scene that followed. I told him he must get up immediately, and go down to the House: so we got him out of bed, and dressed him. I helped him downstairs; then he went into the parlour and loaded his pistols, and I saw him put them in his pocket, for he apprehended he might be attacked by the Union party, and assassinated. We wrapped a blanket round him, and put him in a sedan chair: and as he left the door I stood there, uncertain whether I should ever see him again."!

It was seven o'clock in the morning, and the debate had already lasted fifteen hours, when the great Irish patriot entered the House of Commons. In the history of Parliaments there is no instance of such a dramatic entrance, with the exception of Lord Chatham's last appearance in the English House of Lords. Bearing on his features the most manifest signs of the sufferings which he had endured, the ghastly pallor of his countenance emphasized by the volunteer uniform which he was wearing, Grattan walked to the table to take the oaths, supported on

¹ Grattan's "Life," v. pp. 76, 77.

either side by George Ponsonby and Arthur Moore. If the Government hoped that his name was discredited they were destined to be undeceived. Amidst a breathless silence the whole House stood up as he entered, and when at last he rose to speak there broke from the benches and the galleries applause, the meaning of which it was impossible to mistake. Unable to stand for any length of time, Grattan obtained leave of the House to speak sitting. "Then," says Mr Lecky, in one of the noblest passages which has ever come from his pen, "was witnessed that spectacle, among the grandest in the whole range of mental phenomena, of mind asserting its supremacy over matter—of the power of enthusiasm and the power of genius nerving a feeble and an emaciated frame. As the fire of oratory kindled—as the angel of enthusiasm touched those pallid lips with the living coal—as the old scenes crowded on the speaker's mind, and the old plaudits broke upon his ear, it seemed as though the force of disease was neutralised, and the buoyancy of youth restored. His voice gained a deeper power, his action a more commanding energy, his eloquence an ever-increasing brilliancy. For more than two hours he poured forth a stream of epigram, of argument, and of appeal. He traversed almost the whole of that complex question — he grappled with the various arguments of expediency the Ministers had urged ;

but he placed the issue on the highest of grounds. "The thing," he said, "he proposes to buy is what cannot be sold—liberty." When he at last concluded it must have been felt by all his friends that if the Irish Parliament could have been saved by eloquence it would have been saved by him."¹ Nevertheless, Sir Lawrence Parsons' amendment was rejected by 128 votes to 96.

The excitement of this debate produced a beneficial effect upon Grattan's health. Within a few days of his great speech he was able to fight a duel with Mr Corry, once his friend, but who, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, had been put up by the Government to deliver a fierce attack upon his character, founded on the supposed evidence of his complicity in the Rebellion. In the contest Mr Corry was slightly wounded.²

On February 5th Lord Castlereagh moved the formal introduction of the Union. It is not to our purpose to follow the measure through all its stages. The Government's majorities were at first smaller than they had anticipated. There were not wanting

¹ Lecky, "Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland," pp. 172, 173.

² Grattan was essentially a "man of honour." See the curious account given by Sir Jonah Barrington of Grattan's anxiety to fight a certain Mr Gifford. Barrington remonstrated, but Grattan exclaimed, "It's of no use! I must have a shot at the fellow. I can't sleep unless you go to him for me." Barrington, "Personal Sketches," pp. 202, 203.

those who, like the father of Miss Edgeworth, were on principle in favour of an Union, but who declined to support it until the nation had expressed its approval.¹

Public opinion was making its pressure felt in the House, and the letters of Lord Cornwallis show how great was his anxiety even now. He writes, for instance: "It is not impossible that dangerous tumults may arise before the measure of the Union has gone through all its stages of discussion."² And again, in a letter of January 31st: "The clamour against the Union is increasing rapidly. . . . The Roman Catholics . . . are joining the standard of opposition, to which they have been much impelled by the imprudent speeches and the abuse cast upon them by our friends."³ Under these circumstances the Union was pushed on as rapidly as possible. The Opposition, however, did not relax their efforts. Their main argument was indeed unanswerable—that it was iniquitous to deprive a nation of its liberty without its own consent. Through Lord Corry they now made a remarkable proposal to the Government, that if the measure were laid before the country and received its sanction, they would relinquish all further resistance. It is significant that this offer was

¹ Lecky, "XVIIIth Century," viii. p. 480.

² "Cornwallis Correspondence," iii. p. 165.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

unhesitatingly refused.¹ Towards the end a gloomy apathy settled on the doomed assembly. Many of the patriots refused to be present at the death-sentence. It was on 26th May that Grattan made his last speech in the Parliament of Ireland, and it worthily sustained the reputation which he had won there. It could hardly be otherwise than bitter and passionate, and we may doubt whether it served any good purpose, but the pathos and lofty tone of its peroration should go far to convince an unbiased mind that Grattan was no self-seeking politician, no disloyal agitator, no ranting demagogue, but a great man and a sincere patriot.

"Identification is a solid and imperial maxim, necessary for the preservation of freedom—necessary for that of empire ; but without union of hearts, with a separate Government, and without a separate Parliament—identification is extinction, is dishonour, is conquest—not identification.

"Yet I do not give up the country : I see her in a swoon, but she is not dead. Though in her tomb she lies helpless and motionless, still there is on her lips a spirit of life, and on her cheek a glow of beauty.

" 'Thou art not conquered ; beauty's ensign yet
Is crimson on thy lips and in thy cheeks,
And death's pale flag is not advanced there.'

"While a plank of the vessel sticks together, I will

¹ Lecky, "XVIIIth Century," viii. pp. 476, 477.

not leave her. Let the courtier present his flimsy sail, and carry the light bark of his faith with every new breath of wind—I will remain anchored here, with fidelity to the fortunes of my country, faithful to her freedom—faithful to her fall!”¹

A few weeks later the Union was an accomplished fact. The hall which had resounded with the eloquence of some of the greatest orators who ever spoke the English language was turned into a bank. The banners which waved over the capital of Ireland displayed no longer the symbol of St Patrick in proud isolation.

He is either a bold historian or an ardent politician who states dogmatically the conclusion of the whole matter. But it is perhaps necessary to venture a few generalities on one of the most debated and important questions in modern history. Firstly, then, if the line of reasoning here adopted is at all valid, Grattan's Parliament was a noble experiment which failed. Some modification of the system by which Ireland was governed from 1782 to 1800 was necessary and inevitable. So it seemed to the English Prime Minister of that time, and he proposed to substitute for it a system of a wholly different character. He was only able to effect a single part of his scheme. The separate legislatures of the two countries were amalgamated, and Ireland was hence-

¹ Grattan's "Life," v. p. 176.

forth represented by 100 members sitting in the Imperial Parliament. The methods by which that momentous change was carried out have been stated here in some detail. Whether they were the only ones possible is a matter for speculation. It is at least certain that they were of such a character as to seriously impair the beneficial results which were expected. When the Union was passed, both its chief supporters and its chief opponents appeared in the character of prophets. Two at least of the predictions made on either side deserve notice. It was predicted by Pitt and Castlereagh that Ireland would no longer be the sport of the English party-system, and that all antipathy between the two nations would speedily disappear. It would be painful to dwell on the non-fulfilment of these prophecies. On their side, Foster and Grattan were equally confident in their prognostications. They declared firstly, that the Union would destroy the commercial prosperity of Ireland. This prophecy was falsified. They predicted, secondly, that the transference of Ireland's legislature would be followed by the exodus of her men of fortune and talents, and by the consequent waning of the influence exerted by her educated gentry; in this way the tone of public opinion would be lowered, the country would fall into the hands of agitators and demagogues, and ultimately she would send into the Imperial Parlia-

ment men who only too faithfully reflected her most degraded sentiments.¹ This prophecy was, on the whole, lamentably fulfilled.

The failure of the Union to pacify Ireland, or even to remedy her most distressing maladies, cannot with justice be laid to Pitt's charge. The cruel force of circumstances and the obstinacy of his royal master foiled his statesmanlike scheme. The Union was only, as it were, a preparation for his treatment. Pitt never pretended that it was in itself an infallible prescription. As Lord Rosebery says, "He passed the Union with one object; it has been diverted to another."²

The same political bigotry which has led many Irishmen to condemn Pitt to everlasting perdition for destroying the fabric of Irish independence has led not a few English writers to slander Grattan for daring to erect that fabric. The author of a history of the Irish Union says, for instance: "The truth is, the real Grattan is forgotten or unknown. A glorified figure labelled with his name stalks across the stage of Irish history and distracts our attention.

¹ Grattan said on one occasion to an English gentleman: "You have swept away our constitution, you have destroyed our Parliament, but we shall have our revenge. We will send into the ranks of *your* Parliament, and into the very heart of *your* constitution, a hundred of the greatest scoundrels in the kingdom."

² Lord Rosebery's "Pitt," p. 198.

To the orator, to the mere master of expression, the nobler title of statesman has been awarded by the superstition of a noisy and ignorant multitude."

An endeavour will be made in the concluding chapter of this Essay to show that such an estimate of Grattan is essentially unfair, and that his title to honour does not rest solely on his attempt to give Ireland an independent Parliament. But even if it did, is it just to sneer at any genuine nationality movement? Such a movement, when inspired by noble motives, may not in every case merit our approbation, but it should never meet with our contempt.

"The state that strives for liberty, though foiled,
And forced to abandon what she bravely sought,
Deserves at least applause for her attempt,
And pity for her loss."¹

¹ Cowper's "Task," bk. i. line 367.

CHAPTER XII

THE CLOSING YEARS OF GRATTAN'S LIFE

FOR several years after the passing of the Union Grattan took no part in public life. His lot had been cast in stirring times. He had long been living at very high pressure, and the strange vicissitudes of his career, at one moment the idol of the nation, at another the object of its scorn, had been calculated to seriously undermine his constitution. Probably he could not have borne the strain, but for the singular happiness of his private life. Not seldom did he have occasion to say with Cowper :

“ Domestic bliss ! thou only bliss
Of Paradise that has survived the fall ! ”

At the zenith of his fame he had married Miss Henrietta Fitzgerald, a lady who came of the distinguished stock of the Desmonds. She proved herself worthy of her parentage and her husband. The spirited conduct of Mrs Grattan on one eventful night in January 1800 has already been noticed, and at

every crisis in her husband's fortunes she had realised the ideal of a statesman's wife.

Grattan was not one of those men to whom the excitement of debate and the sound of popular applause are necessities of existence. We may doubt whether he was ever happier than when, surrounded by his family and his friends, he was living the life of a jovial country gentleman. Love of nature amounted with him to a positive passion, and any prolonged residence in a town had a depressing effect upon him. Thus, for instance, we find him in 1788 writing to his old friend Broome from Bath: "I long for clear water, and clear mountain air, 'oh rus! quando te aspiciam?'. . . . I hope in about three weeks to see you; nor do I expect until that time to have any enjoyment of the country; that is, any enjoyment at all."¹ To Nature he went alike for inspiration and for solace. On the beautiful banks of the Liffey, not far from Dublin, stood Celbridge Abbey, the seat for many years of Colonel Marlay, Grattan's uncle. It was here on a spot indissolubly connected with the name of Swift that the Irish patriot, still in the prime of youth, and with every prospect of his ideals being realised, had meditated those speeches which immortalised the birth of his country's

¹ Grattan's "Life," vol. iii. p. 338.

freedom. And now that he was almost past middle age, and his fondest hopes had been shattered, it was to Tinnehinch, built amidst the romantic scenery of Wicklow, that he retired for consolation. The routine, at once healthy and cheerful, which is the charm of a country life, gradually restored his jaded system. It was his habit at this period to rise every morning at six and bathe in the river, winter or summer.¹ With the recovery of his health, Grattan's spirits revived. He entertained his numerous friends, managed his estate, superintended the education of his sons, read his favourite authors, and in fact spent in retirement some of the happiest and certainly the most peaceful years of his life. For some time he refused all invitations to embark once more on the troubled waters of politics. It took him many years to become at all reconciled to the changed order of things, and the Union was a subject which he could never mention with equanimity. But his Whig friends in England were anxious for his help, and were constantly pointing out what services he could render to his country in the Imperial Parliament. As early as 1801 Lord Fitzwilliam wrote to him: "You must not be buried in the mountains of Wicklow, nor deprive the country of talents, in which it has

¹ Grattan's "Life," vol. v. p. 211.

a property.”¹ But it was Charles Fox who at last drew the great Irishman from his retreat by an appeal to his patriotism, which he could not resist.

It has been already said that Pitt, after having made assurances which Lord Cornwallis at any rate considered equivalent to pledges, entirely deserted the cause of the Irish Catholics. The religious scruples of George III. reduced the legislative union to an absurdity by closing the doors of the Imperial Parliament upon three-fourths of the Irish nation. There is no such reason to account for the extraordinary inertness of Pitt on the questions of the commutation of tithe and the payment of priests. Both of these measures were necessary to Ireland's tranquillity, and would probably have averted half a century of confusion and agrarian outrage. An analysis of Pitt's motives must be left to others.² It is sufficient to say that the Catholics, having supported the Union in expectation of relief, were informed that the Government regretted its inability to do anything for them. It was in order to champion

¹ Grattan's "Life," vol. v. p. 213.

² On the question of Pitt's conduct, see Lecky, "Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland," pp. 196-201, and "History of XVIIIth Century," vol. viii. pp. 501-537, and Lord Ashbourne's "Pitt," ch. x.

their cause, and prevent, if possible, the dangerous results of this desertion, that Grattan was induced by Fox in 1805 to exchange the hills of Wicklow for the atmosphere of Westminster.

The task which he had undertaken was no easy one. He had now to contend with the public opinion of England, and two circumstances had conspired to prejudice that public opinion against Catholic Emancipation. It is well known that the educated classes had been so thoroughly frightened by the excesses of the French Revolution that in the early years of the last century they were strongly biassed against reforms of any description. But even more fatal to the hopes of the Irish Catholics was the rapid growth of the Evangelical Movement. It is usual for theologians to dwell with horror upon the religious condition of England in the eighteenth century. They point to the alarming growth of scepticism, the indifference to all things spiritual which permeated every section of the population, the increase of immorality, and the prevalence of drunkenness. We are not here concerned with defending the morals of "the age of common sense," except to notice that it was in the congenial soil of the eighteenth century that the noble plant of religious toleration sprang up and flourished. For more than a hundred years the two great creeds of Western Europe drew closer together, and the tendency had been well

marked in Ireland. Kirwan, for instance, the greatest Irish theologian of the day, had passed from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism solely because he believed that it would afford him a greater scope for usefulness. It was in the course of a panegyric and not, as some might suppose, of a censure upon Kirwan that Grattan said of him: "If I did not know him to be a Christian clergyman, I should suppose him by his writings to be a philosopher of the Augustan age."¹ But now latitudinarian principles were being shaken by the stern teaching of the Evangelicals. Dogma began to take the place of practice. Clergymen no longer sought to guide their flocks into the right path by dwelling on the reasonableness of a well-regulated Christian life, but by enlarging upon the awful fate reserved for the wicked. Thus it came about that men went once more to the Book of the Revelation for phrases applicable to the Church of Rome, and when Grattan came over to England he found that he had not only to contend with the scruples of the King, but with those of a majority of his subjects as well.

There was great excitement to see how the Irish orator of whose fame everyone had heard would acquit himself in the Imperial Parliament. Flood's

¹ Lecky, "Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland" (Henry Grattan), p. 133.

failure there was not forgotten, nor the reason which Grattan himself had given for it that "he was a tree of the forest, too old and too great to be transplanted at fifty." Grattan too was a tree of the forest, the prophets said as they shook their heads, and he was nearly sixty. On 13th May 1805 Fox moved that the House should go into committee to consider the claims of the Irish Catholics. Grattan, who was representing Earl Fitzwilliam's borough of Malton, sat down at the back of the hall, but Fox came up, and saying, "That is no place for the Irish Demosthenes,"¹ led him to the Front Opposition Bench. Thence he rose to answer Dr Duigenan, a fierce anti-Catholic. The breathless silence which reigned during the first part of his speech showed that Grattan was on his trial. He had not proceeded far before he summed up what Duigenan had said. "His speech," said Grattan, "consists of four parts : 1st, an invective uttered against the religion of the Catholics ; 2nd, an invective uttered against the present generation ; 3rd, an invective against the past ; and 4th, an invective against the future : here the limits of creation interposed and stopped the member. It is to defend those different generations and their religion I rise, to rescue the Catholic from his attack and the Protestants from his defence."² It was at

¹ MacCarthy's "Henry Grattan," p. 78.

² Grattan's "Speeches," iv. p. 58.

this point that Pitt, who, with his head resting on his hand, had been earnestly listening, gave the first signal for applause with a loud "Hear—hear—hear." After this the cheering became general.

Presently there occurred a fine eulogy of the Irish Parliament, containing a sentence long remembered for its singular beauty: "The Parliament of Ireland—of that assembly I have a parental recollection. I sate by her cradle, I followed her hearse. In fourteen years she acquired for Ireland what you did not acquire for England in a century—freedom of trade, independency of the Legislature, independency of the judges, restoration of the final judicature, repeal of a Perpetual Mutiny Bill, Habeas Corpus Act, Nullum Tempus Act—a great work! You will exceed it, and I shall rejoice."¹ The speech was an unqualified success. Pitt exclaimed, "Burke told me that Grattan was a great man for a popular assembly, and now I believe it."² The Whigs were delighted. The *Annual Register* said that it was "one of the most brilliant speeches ever heard within the walls of Parliament."³ It is true that the motion was defeated, but every one had expected that.

The position of Grattan in the British Assembly

¹ Grattan's Speeches," pp. 75, 76.

² Grattan's "Life," v. p. 262.

³ MacCarthy's "Grattan," p. 78.

was henceforth assured. He might, if he had wished, have figured as one of the great Whig leaders. In 1806, when Pitt died and the short-lived Ministry of "All the Talents" was formed, Fox pressed him to take office. But acting upon the principles which he had laid down for his political conduct, Grattan refused. He had determined to devote the last years of his life to the cause of Catholic Emancipation, and he believed that he could serve it best by maintaining an independent attitude. Nor would he give his assent to the methods by which Daniel O'Connell was attempting to force the hands of the English Government. The persistency with which he followed the *via media* was bound to involve him occasionally in unpopularity, but it was a part of his creed to disregard popular clamour. In 1807 he supported a Government Coercion Bill, because he believed that every step should be taken to suppress the secret societies, which were the bane of his country.

In the following year his conduct on the Veto Question increased the tempest which he had provoked. Canning had revived a proposal to settle the Catholic question by a compromise. It amounted briefly to this: that the English Parliament should concede emancipation to the Catholics, provided that the Crown was allowed to exercise a veto on the appointment of their Bishops. Grattan

had been previously opposed to the principle involved, but he had been induced to change his mind by various considerations. In the first place, the Vatican was ready to assent to such a course, and secondly, he had been given to understand that the Catholic prelates of Ireland were in favour of it. But he was chiefly influenced by the reflection that a speedy solution of the Catholic question would diminish the chances of French intrigue succeeding in Ireland. In nearly all Catholic countries the sanction of the State was necessary to Episcopal appointments. O'Connell, however, protested that the case of Ireland was different—that for the Government of a Protestant country to exercise a veto on the ecclesiastical appointments of a Catholic one was monstrous. He easily persuaded the peasantry that the position of the priesthood was threatened. This separation of Grattan and O'Connell seriously delayed the solution of the Catholic problem, and the whole incident forms another instance of the breakdown at the last moment of so many promising settlements of Irish questions. Neither O'Connell nor Grattan would give way. In 1813 the latter almost succeeded in carrying Catholic Emancipation, conditioned by the veto. In the following year his services were refused by the Catholic Board.¹

¹ Lecky, "Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland" (Henry Grattan), p. 226.

But if Grattan had lost much of his influence in Ireland, in England, a country which usually honours great men as they deserve, his reputation continued to rise. In the House of Commons it was the custom of those who had worked with him in Ireland to address him as "Sir," and it was noticed that Lord Castlereagh habitually paid him this mark of respect. Politicians of all views courted Grattan, and he was a welcome guest in the great London houses. Ample atonement, indeed, was made to the illustrious Irishman for the injustice which had been done to him in 1798. But when chance offered, he would escape from the metropolis to join some of his friends on a boating excursion on the Thames,¹ or better still, to spend a few months at his beloved Tinnehinch. Fond as he was of England, he never forgot that Ireland had the first claim on his powers, and, with one exception, he took little part in any debate which did not refer to his own country. That exception was in 1815, when on Napoleon's escape from Elba he delivered a long and powerful speech in favour of a renewal of the French War.

He had always denounced the power of Napoleon as fatal to the peace of Europe, and it formed the keynote of this speech.

"Sir," he said, "the French Government is war ; it is a stratocracy, elective, aggressive, and predatory ;

¹ Grattan's "Life," v. pp. 413, 414.

her armies live to fight, and fight to live; their constitution is essentially war, and the object of that war, the conquest of Europe."¹

In 1816 Grattan was once more entrusted by the Catholics with their petition for relief, and again in 1817 and 1819 with unwearying assiduity, or, as he himself said, with a "desperate fidelity," he exerted all the powers of his setting genius in their cause. The smallness of the majorities against him clearly proved that he had made a profound impression upon English public opinion. In 1816 he was refused leave to bring in his bill by 31 votes, in 1817 by 24 votes, and in 1819, in a very full House, by 2 only, the numbers being 243 to 241.²

Since 1806 Grattan had sat in the Imperial Parliament as a member for Dublin. He was again elected in 1818, but as he left the hustings, he was attacked by a mob and severely cut on the head. This incident, lamentable in itself, was productive of good results, for it aroused such storms of indignation among all classes of Irishmen, as to show that the best elements in the nation were at last united in recognising the services of its truest patriot. Grattan himself thought little of the matter. "Like Actæon, I am devoured by my own hounds," was his only remark as they bore him bleeding away, and in

¹ Grattan's "Speeches," iv. p. 374.

² "Two Centuries of Irish History," p. 249.

answer to an address of sympathy from Dublin, he replied that he attached no importance to the occurrence.¹

His noble life was now drawing to a fitting close. In the autumn of 1819 he was attacked while in Ireland by a severe illness, and spent the winter in considerable pain. In January the death of George III. occurred, and was followed by another general election, in which Grattan was returned for Dublin for the sixth time. The spring of 1820 was very fine, and the loveliness of reviving nature seemed for a time to restore him. But as he felt death approaching he was seized with a desire to speak once more on behalf of the cause which he had so much at heart. The doctors in Dublin sought to dissuade him from the attempt. They told him that symptoms of dropsy were appearing, and that any exertion might prove fatal. But Grattan replied: "Doctors, you are right. I will, however, go. We are both right—you, in ordering me to stay, and I in deciding to go." And again a few days later: "If God grants me only one month more to do the business, I am sure I shall be very thankful! I will do my duty. I will make the motion . . . and then I will make my bow."²

On 20th May he sailed from Dublin. As he left

¹ See his reply in Grattan's "Life," vol. v. p. 537.

² Grattan's "Life," v. p. 546.

the quay the crowds which had assembled there loudly cheered him, and Grattan, calling for wine, drank to the health of the citizens. He reached London on the 31st, after a most painful journey, but he was now too enfeebled by disease to carry out his cherished project.

Mr Lecky, in his "Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland," has told the story of four great Irishmen, Jonathan Swift, Henry Flood, Henry Grattan, and Daniel O'Connell. Of these four, three met their end under circumstances of the deepest melancholy—Swift in madness, Flood in almost complete isolation, and O'Connell in hopeless dejection. To Grattan alone it was given to die happily, surrounded by the love of his family and his friends, the object of the affection of one country and of the admiration of another.

His deathbed was indeed singularly peaceful. Many of his old comrades in his campaigns came to say farewell, and there were some who had fought against him. Amongst the latter was Lord Castlereagh. Grattan was asleep and did not see him, but on being told of his visit, he said to his son: "If you get into the House of Commons, I must beg of you not to attack Lord Castlereagh. The union has passed. The business between him and me is over, and it is for the interests of Ireland that Lord Castlereagh should be Minister."¹ He constantly

¹ Grattan's "Life," v. p. 553.

reverted during the last days of his life to the events of 1782, and many were his references to those friends and fellow-labourers who had left the stage before him. Nor did he omit a tribute to the memory of his great rival, Flood. Almost his last words were: "I die with a love of liberty in my heart, and this declaration in favour of my country in my hand." He referred to a paper which he was holding, and which contained his final advice to Ireland, to seek no connection but with Great Britain, and to England, to remove the disabilities against the Irish Catholics.

The end came quite painlessly on 4th June 1820. He had nearly completed his seventy-fourth year.

Grattan had wished to be buried in Ireland, but on the day of his death he had acceded to the request of the Duke of Sussex that Westminster Abbey should be his resting-place. He was interred in the presence of nearly all the leading men of the day, by the side of Pitt and Fox.

If the story of Grattan's life has been told impartially in this essay, it was a very noble and a very great one. It was not a life without blemishes or without mistakes. His faults were those of a high-strung and sensitive nature, and no man with such a nature who engages in statesmanship, the most delicate and most difficult of all human occupations, can produce great achievements without making corresponding errors. The chief defects of Grattan were

a proneness to precipitation in act and word, and a tendency to believe that the ideal is the real. They cannot detract from a patriotism as pure and disinterested as ever man possessed, or from a devotion to duty, which made him impervious to applause and to ignominy, careless of success and of failure, and ready, when he deemed it needful, to sacrifice his dearest projects to a higher good.

Amongst those who had known and loved this great Irishman during the last years of his life was Sydney Smith. Shortly after Grattan's death he wrote an article in the *Edinburgh Review*, which contained a reference to his friend so beautiful and so true, that it may be quoted here :

"Great men hallow a whole people, and lift up all who live in their time. What Irishman does not feel proud that he has lived in the days of Grattan? Who has not turned to him for comfort, from the false friends and open enemies of Ireland? Who did not remember him in the days of its burnings, wastings, and murders? No Government ever dismayed him—the world could not bribe him—he thought only of Ireland: lived for no other object, dedicated to her his beautiful fancy, his elegant wit, his manly courage, and all the splendour of his astonishing eloquence.

"He was so born, so gifted, that poetry, forensic skill, elegant literature, and all the highest attain-

ments of human genius were within his reach : but he thought the noblest occupation of a man was to make other men happy and free ; and in that straight line he kept for fifty years, without one side look, one yielding thought, one motive in his heart which he might not have laid open to the view of God or man." ¹

It only remains to add that of the five great boons which he sought for Ireland, Free Trade, Parliamentary Reform, Commutation of Tithe, Catholic Emancipation, and Legislative Independence, the first four are accomplished facts. But, after all, the value of Grattan to Ireland is not to be estimated by his achievements. The memory of such a career is a priceless heritage to his countrymen for all time to come. If any man should ever for one moment entertain a doubt that it is possible to be at the same time an Irish patriot and a friend of England, that doubt will vanish if he but recall the name and life of Henry Grattan.

¹ "Memoir of Rev. S. Smith," vol. i. p. 190.

APPENDIX

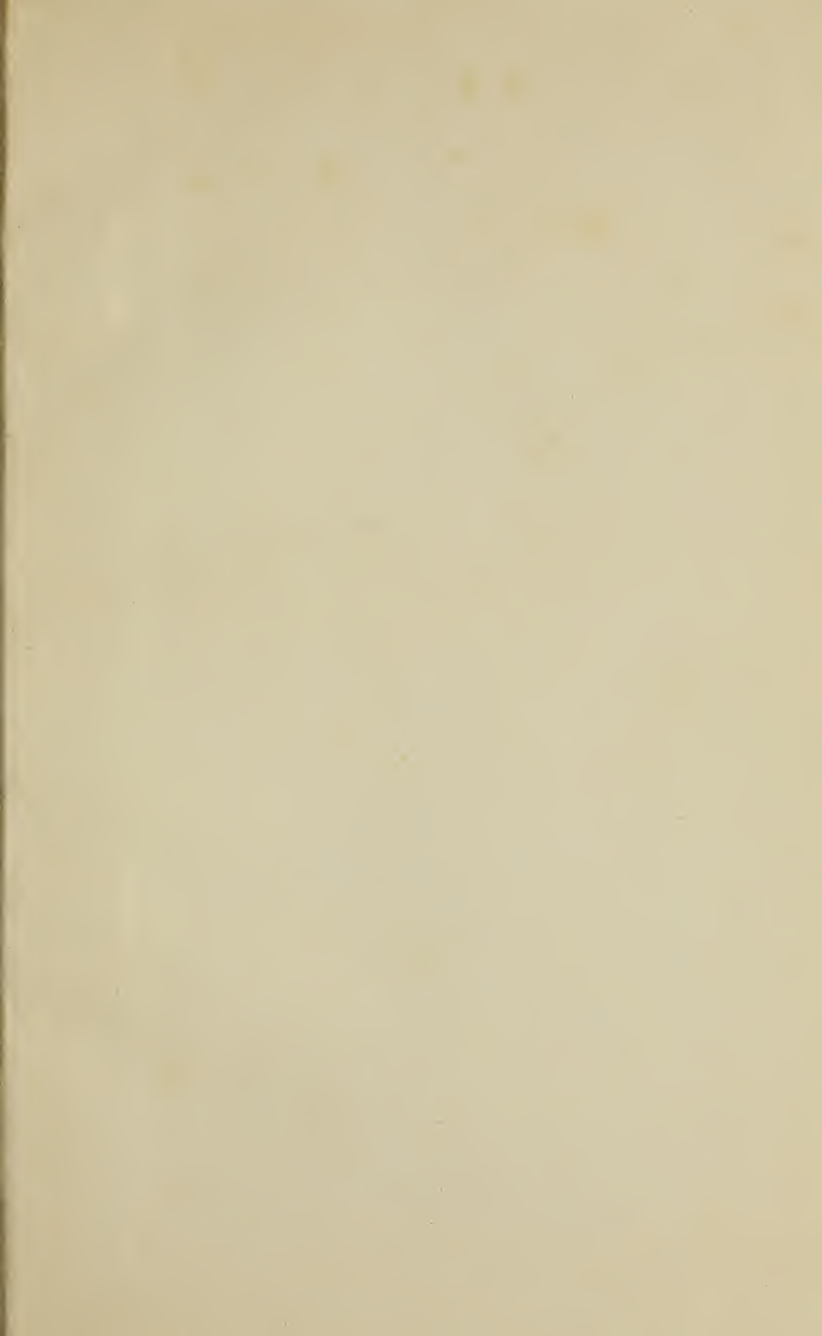
A LIST OF THE VICEROYS FROM 1772 TO THE UNION

<i>Viceroy</i>	<i>Date of Arrival in Ireland</i>
LORD HARCOURT	1772
EARL OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE	1776
LORD CARLISLE	1780
DUKE OF PORTLAND	1782 (April)
LORD TEMPLE (first Viceroyalty)	1782 (September)
LORD NORTHINGTON	1783
DUKE OF RUTLAND	1784
LORD BUCKINGHAM, formerly LORD TEMPLE (second Viceroyalty)	1787 (December)
EARL OF WESTMORLAND	1790
EARL FITZWILLIAM	1795 (January)
LORD CAMDEN	1795 (31st March)
LORD CORNWALLIS	1798 (June)

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 able Henry Grattan" . . . } *By* HIS SON
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